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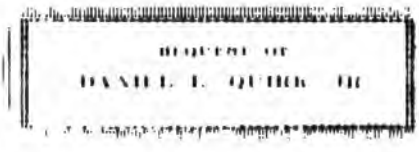
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THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An Illustrated Quarterly

EDITED BY SHELDON CHENEY

VOLUME I

DETROIT
AT THE ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATRE
1916-1917

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THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

VOLUME I NUMBER I
NOVEMBER 1916

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Foreword

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE is a direct outgrowth of dramatic conditions existing in this country to-day. For many years the established theatre, organized as a business, has held its great audience more or less securely, and has monopolized the important playhouses. Naturally it has made existing dramatic publications its trade journals. Recently a new generation of artist-workers — playwrights, actors, directors, decorators — has grown up on the outside, establishing its own experimental playhouses, and creating small but appreciative audiences. It even has pushed its way into certain strongholds of the older organization. But before its ultimate conquest of the "regular" theatre, the progressive group must have more experience — and, we believe, the broadening and solidifying influence of a journal of its own.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE is designed for the artist who approaches the theatre in the spirit of the arts and crafts movement, and for the theatregoer who is awake artistically and intellectually. To these it will offer a news-medium and a forum for the expression of original ideas. It will cover the fields of all the arts of the theatre; or, more accurately, it will cover all those contributive arts that are working toward that wider synthetic art of the theatre which is yet to be realized. Its material will be sought not alone in the little theatres and art theatres, but wherever the creative spirit touches theatre work, whether in professional or in non-professional channels.

To help conserve and develop craetive impulse in the American theatre; to provide a permanent record of American dramatic art in its formative period; to hasten the day when the speculators will step out of the established playhouse and let the artists come in: such are the aims of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE. It begins modestly; but there is a good fight to fight, and it intends to grow to the task. It bespeaks your coöperation.

P. S.—We intend not to be swallowed by the movies.

The Cranbrook Theatre

On the estate of George G. Booth Esq., Cranbrook, Michigan. Marcus R. Burrowes, Architect.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Volume I NOVEMBER, 1916 Number 1

The Cranbrook Masque

By FRANK TOMPKINS

THE occasion of the Cranbrook Masque was the dedication of a new Greek theatre at Cranbrook, the Bloomfield Hills estate of Mr. George Booth. Bloomfield Hills is an up-hill-and-down-dale section of wooded country about twenty miles north of Detroit, which contains some of the most beautiful estates of the Middle West. Cranbrook lies in the center of this rolling country, with a stream and a small lake filling its hollows, and forests on its hillsides. On the top of its highest hill, the very crest of the country, Mr. Booth has built his Greek theatre. From the semicircular terraces of seats the audience views the landscape dropping away on all sides into green valleys and rising again to meet the distant sky-line. The scene quite changes its character with the changing lights of day, but there is not a moment at which it is not lovely.

The problem of the masque was to produce something that should not only do justice to the natural beauty of the surroundings and the architectural beauty of the theatre, but also make use of that beauty, perhaps not as background, but at least as a part of a larger beautiful whole, which should be the masque. That the production was adequate to the setting was due to the perfect understanding of the problem which the producer, Sam Hume, brought to his task; to the background of knowledge and artistry broad enough and fine enough to meet all requirements, of both the producer and the author, Sidney Coe Howard; and to the support that Mr. Booth and The Arts and Crafts Society of Detroit gave untiringly to the production.

The theatre itself is typical of two movements which are under way in this country, the movement toward the establishment of outdoor theatres, and the movement toward the creation of private theatres. The former is the one with which the public is better acquainted, because in the nature of things private theaters do not receive the publicity that such great outdoor theatres as the one at Berkeley have had. Most of the private playhouses are of the type called garden theatres. They have green-sward stages and clipped hedge backgrounds. As a rule there is very

little architectural detail, perhaps a few well-placed columns, a pergola, a statue in its niche in the hedge, or a bit of wall. Such theatres are small and suited to the intimate type of performance. They are ideal for such airy trifles as Ernest Dowson's "Pierrot of the Minute." But the Cranbook theatre is much larger; it has ample space for pageantry, and it is thoroughly architectural. Its wide curve of seats is backed by a high hedge, but on every other side the severest Greek colonnades are silhouetted against the sky.

The most strikingly unique characteristic is the plan that makes it virtually two theatres in one. It may be an intimate theatre where the less spacious forms of drama are not hopelessly lost, or it may, at the will of the producer, become a pageant theatre, with a vista adequate to processions and distant approaches. This is accomplished by having two stages, one fifty feet behind the other. Directly from the green semicircle of the orchestra rises the first stage. This is about twelve feet deep and is flanked by two enclosed temple-like structures that may be used for dressing rooms or for concealed orchestra, or for light switches. It is backed by a row of Ionic columns, forming three entrances for the actors, as in the old Greek theaters. But the spaces between these columns, which in most theaters reveal a view of the distant sea or a hilly landscape, are here filled with heavy neutral-toned curtains, so weighted that they fall in straight dignified folds, which it takes more than a summer breeze to lift. When these curtains are closed, the cold effect of the purely Greek stage is perceptibly lessened. The effect of warmth without a loss of dignity is heightened by the relief panels on each of the blank walls at the sides of the stage.

When the curtains at the back are drawn apart, the spectator looks through the wide spaces between the columns, across a long pool of clear water, to a second stage backed by a temple, with a few pointed cedars rising above its roof. A pageant may enter through the center of this temple, or if the wide doors are thrown open, may even be seen coming up the path that leads to the theater. Thence it may come down the walks beside the pool, reflected in the clear water as it comes, down through the front stage and even into the green semicircle of the orchestra, if the scene warrants that intimacy. Exits may be made even more impressive, with their sense of great distance enhanced by the careful use of lights. In spite of the distance from the back stage to the audience, the ordinary conversational voice carries perfectly, probably because of the shape of the back stage and the presence of the pool of water. In the production of last

June the lights were manipulated to throw first the back stage and again the front stage into prominence, producing an effect of magical change of time and place. There was a sense of unreality, of the accomplishment of the impossible, that was marvelously effective in the more romantic incidents, and yet a feeling at all times that the material was absolutely real, not distorted but spiritualized by its treatment.

Every resource of the theatre was brought into play during the masque. The Greek chorus entered from the greatest distance possible, with the darkened front stage forming a frame of columns for the procession, warmly colored by the lights of the actual sunset. The procession came forward clear into the orchestra, where it formed a subdued foreground of color for the Greek episode, played on the fore-stage in the deep blue of twilight, with the back temple now faintly gleaming against a somber background of pointed cedars and evening sky.

The second episode, the mediæval, was intimately played, with brilliant figures of the townsfolk swarming in from the side entrances and filling the orchestra. It ended with the middle entrance of the front stage filled with a mediæval church window, against which the Virgin and two angels were seen. The perfect lighting throughout this scene subordinated, almost obliterated, all sense of the Greek theatre, and threw into dramatic relief the jongleurs, the monks, the brilliantly clad townsfolk, and the beautiful picture of the Virgin.

The Elizabethan episode used the whole theater again, but with warm color, a wealth of detail, and a riot of merry dances. Diccon o'Bells flashed the whole length of the theatre with a rout of children behind him, and Maid Marian appeared from the audience to accept his challenge and dance him down. The sea-rovers and the pirates were almost a silhouette against the dimly lighted pool.

The fourth episode, set in the Italian Renaissance, was played on the front stage, with warm light for its gay artificiality of Columbine and Clown, and the cold blue of the pool for the background of its most spiritual moment. In the final scene, the Beloved came in her wonderful blue boat across the pool, from the darkness that shrouded its farther end and made it seem to stretch away into infinity; and she met her poet in the clear bright light that flooded the front stage.

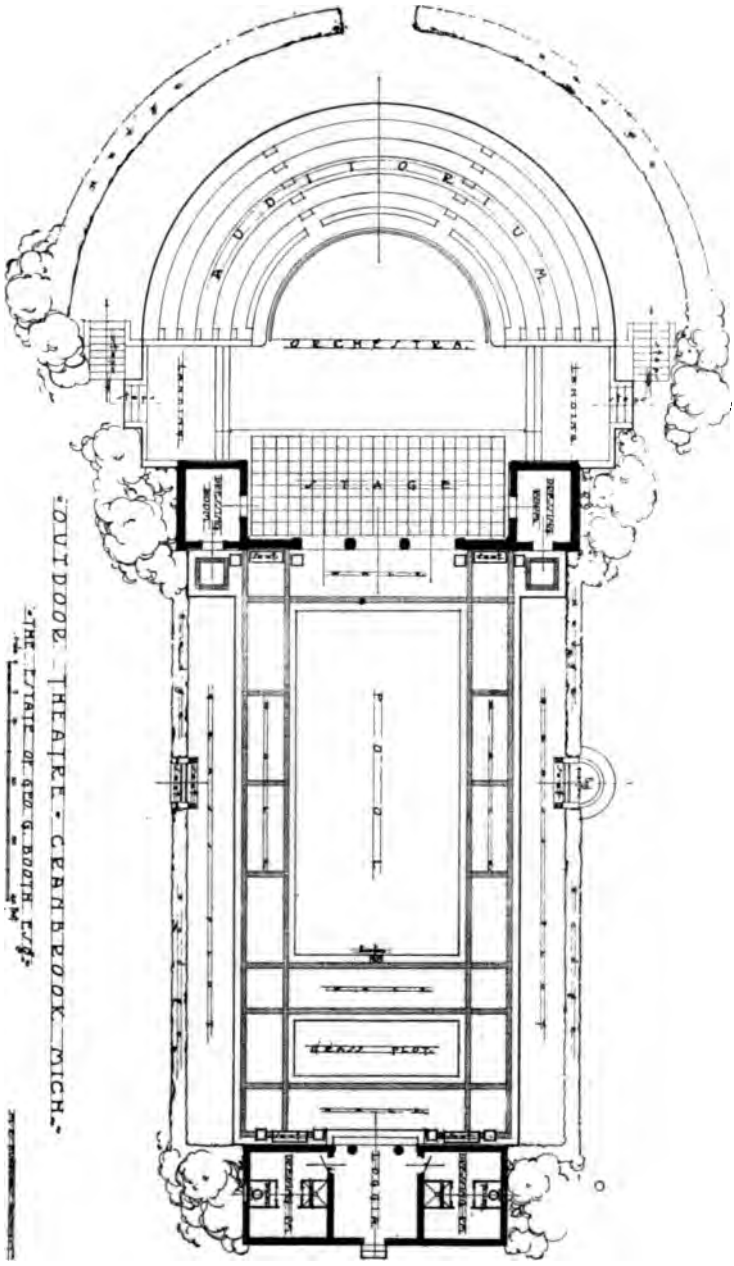
In short, Mr. Hume played upon the theatre a tune in lights, a marvelous tune that kept the audience in a state of rapt expectation, but a tune that was designed only to make harmony

with the place and the time and the story. The lights were never obtrusive; in fact lights, story, place were all one, and it is only in the days that follow that a spectator is able to separate the causes that produced each subtle effect — or, to be more exact, to determine that the causes are never to be separated, but always to be seen as a force remarkably combined from many.

Perhaps it is not so hard to understand how Mr. Hume and Mr. Howard so perfectly fused their work, when it is known that they worked out their plans together with the theatre as the starting-point. But it is difficult to see how the Arts and Crafts Society could step in at this point, and so delicately fit in every detail of color and design as to reinforce the effects, never contradict the light scheme or the emphasis of grouping, and yet give an impression of historical accuracy which was always subordinate to emotional and imaginative effect.

As much might be said of Frederick Alexander's music, if it were within the scope of this paper; and the text of the masque deserves detailed analysis because of its structural qualities and its delicate adaptation of verse-forms to bigger effects. Certainly it showed unusual knowledge and skill on the part of the author. Its theme was the triumph of romance and imaginative beauty over the forces that have opposed those qualities in every age. The theatre and masque alike stand for that triumph.

Whatever may have been the forces against which romantic beauty has had to contend in other ages, it is evident enough that commercial aims are its greatest foes to-day. It needs no Cranbrook Masque to point out that fact. But it does need a Cranbrook Masque to show how strong already are the counter-forces on the side of romantic beauty. When a man is willing to put into a purely artistic venture the money (it is a pity to speak of it, but after all that is our point in this commercial age) that Mr. Booth has put into his theatre, and the thousands that must have gone into the production, and then to insist on subordinating himself absolutely to the result, even though his own time and taste are represented more accurately than a chance audience would guess, there cannot be great reason to fear for the future of imaginative drama. And when he can command to help him such ideals and such loving care in workmanship as he found in Sam Hume, in Sidney Coe Howard, in the Arts and Crafts Society, in Frederick Alexander, and in the hundred or so actors and artists who caught the spirit of the whole and lent their help to bring about the final success, then romantic beauty has certainly had its renaissance in America.



Plan of the Cranbrook Theatre

Marcus R. Burrowes, Architect. *By courtesy of "Modern Building."*

The Cranbrook Theatre

View from auditorium. By courtesy of "Modern Building."

Acting and the New Stagecraft

By Walter Prichard Eaton

The new spirit of experimentation in the arts of the theatre has, so far at least, affected the American theatre but little, so little, indeed, that the result is almost negligible. By the American theatre I mean, of course, the professional theatre patronized by the great public, which sends its productions out through the land and is, when all is said, the stronghold which must be stormed and captured before Progress can claim a victory. Robert Jones and Joseph Urban and Livingston Platt, to be sure, have designed certain settings, some of them beautiful settings; and Maxfield Parrish is now being called in to give his talent to the theatre. Yet one would scarcely call the Ziegfeld "Follies" an experiment in the new stagecraft, though Mr. Urban did design the settings; while the ballet at the Hippodrome, devised by Bakst and Pavlowa, was, after the first night or two, so befuddled with Hippodrome chorus girls (who finally were hauled up on wires as a climax!) that it could hardly be distinguished from the Good Old Stuff. We must, I fear, face the fact that the experimental spirit in America is still an amateur spirit, and in the immediate future, at least, we must look for its flowering, for the results of genuine experiment, in the various "little theatres" and other refuges of the dissatisfied or the dilettantes. After all, there can be no progress without dissatisfaction, and it is often enough the dilettante with talent who becomes the professional with power.

But in my own observations of these experimental theatres, I have been struck with one odd fact. While the experimenters were eager to produce fresher and more vital drama, to create more illusive and effective lighting effects, to paint more suggestive and beautiful scenery, to get away from the dull rut of conventional "realism," at the same time they were, almost without exception, apparently quite neglectful of showing us fresher, more vital, more illusive *acting*, or at any rate ignorant of how to do it. In the case of such an organization as the Washington Square Players, say, we must of course be mindful of the fact that the scene-painters are frequently professional artists, the dramatists professional dramatists, while the actors have been for the most part amateurs. No amateur, however gifted, can walk out on the boards and give at once a performance without a flaw, can give a performance as illusive of character as any

second-rate professional with intelligence. All the more reason, then, why the actors in the experimental theatres should be trained at least to do well what they can do well, and what the conventional professional actors do badly, while they are learning slowly in the hard school of practice to create the illusion of character.

What are some of the things they could be trained to do? In the first place, they could be trained to speak. The new stagecraft, so far as it has been practised here, seems to have forgotten that as long as it is dedicated to the spoken drama, part of its task will be to make that speech audible, and consequently to make it effective to the last degree. Ask yourself this question: if you were witnessing "Hamlet," which would you rather find, a glorious, illusive setting with a bad actor mumbling "To be or not to be . . . .", or a bare stage and Booth speaking those words as only he could speak them? Certainly, most people would choose Booth, and they would be quite right in so doing. Yet, under the influence of our bald, colloquial modern drama, beautiful speech, clean enunciation, a sense for rhythm, has almost perished from the professional stage. Let a modern author write a speech which he wants to hear delivered like music as well as human conversation — and he weeps bloody tears at each rehearsal. There are no actors to read it. It cannot be read properly without proper feeling for verbal felicities, and without practice. But a feeling for verbal felicities is just what genuine devotees of the new stagecraft should have, or their boasted devotion to beauty is a one-sided thing; and practice in correct, clean, felicitous utterance is just what the stages of our experimental theatres should afford. The rankest amateur ought to be able to pronounce correctly, and enunciate all the syllables of a polysyllabic word without swallowing the penult. If he cannot, he should be politely invited to become a professional and join Mr. Cohan's company. When you enter a little theatre you ought at least to be confident of hearing better speech than in any Broadway production.

Our experimental theatres are not dedicated to realism. They do not neglect it, but the new stagecraft needs the fanciful, the poetic, the suggestive, for its full expression. And the fanciful, the poetic, the suggestive in drama cannot be acted as the realistic drama is acted. The instinct which leads the opera singer to gesticulate like a windmill, which leads Lou-Tellegen to strike romantic attitudes, is a perfectly sound instinct. Convention has made the result grotesque, to be sure, but in their hatred of

convention too many experimental theatres have quite lost sight of the rightness of the instinct, and as a result play a scene of romance or poetry, in a setting not of this world but of the abstract land of beauty, with actors who stand about as stiff as freshmen at the President's first reception, talking in the nasal, colloquial tones of the average American. This may be unconventional, but it isn't good art, and it is holding back the new stagecraft in popular regard. If the new stagecraft is to play fantasy and poetry, in imaginative, beautiful sets, it must train its actors to beauty and grace of carriage, to fluidity of pose, to expressive gesture (there is nothing poetic about keeping your hands in your pockets, as the mere public very well knows), to that general charm of romantic bearing which certain of the older actors even in our generation possessed, which is as old as histrionic art, indeed, and will always be as young as the latest lyric. To try to foster and develop this charm should be a task of the experimental theatres. If they cannot keep those who possess it from the affectations and absurdities of conventional romance, from the posturings of a Lou-Tellegen, that is merely a confession of weakness on their part. It is no sign of strength, certainly, to be so afraid of the excesses that you abolish the essentials.

Indeed, in the revolt from the conventions of the "commercial" theatre, it is rather to be feared that we have tended to throw overboard a good deal that is sound and necessary. Enough light to see the actors' faces is one thing. The downright force and predominant importance of good acting is another. When all is said, the spoken drama is brought to life for an audience by the actors, not the electrician nor the scene-painter, not the costume designer nor the orchestra conductor nor even the stage-manager, but *by the actors*. It is they the audience watches, recking not of the director who may have trained them; they who are, for three hours traffic, the protagonists of the play. It can be no better than they are, and with the great public its success will depend upon them.

Little theatres, experimental theatres of all sorts, may help the new stagecraft in a hundred ways, and bring various kinds of pleasure to us, but they will never ultimately persuade the public unless they can show illusive acting, unless they can train players to *impersonate*, to bring the characters of the drama to vivid life. Too many of our experimental theatres are weakest on this most important side; they have neglected the art of acting, the foundation stone of the dramatic structure, and the

stone which changes least of all with the changing styles of architecture. They ask patronage to behold beautiful scenery, to hear brilliant "lines," to witness the play of magic lights; but what the public primarily pays for is a story, so well acted that it cheats them into belief. The new stagecraft has got to play the game. It has got to furnish the actors. Nor is that so impossible a task, if once we realize its necessity.

Exhibitions of Stage Art

One who watches for signs of re-awakened interest in the arts of the theatre, in this country, must find satisfaction in the increasingly frequent exhibitions of costume designs and models for stage settings. Certainly the visual side of theatre art is receiving its due. Since Sam Hume collected and arranged his comprehensive exhibition of stage art, which was shown in Chicago, New York and other centers two years ago, there has been a notable quickening of interest among craftsmen in and out of the playhouse. Already this season New York has seen one exhibition of the sort, and another is announced for January.

Under the direction of Thomas Raymond Ball an exhibition of costumes and costume drawings, with a few designs and models for stage settings, was shown at the galleries of the National Society of Craftsmen, from October 18 to 28. Some of the best recent work in the field of costume design for the theatre was shown, including plates by Willy Pogany, Maxwell Armfield, Raymond Johnson, Robert Edmond Jones, Frank Zimmerer, and George Wolfe Plank. The models exhibited were by Rhea Wells and John Wenger.

Early in January Mrs. John W. Alexander will arrange for the Arden Studios, 599 Fifth Avenue, an historical exhibition of costumes and stage settings.

May Allah increase the tribe of exhibition makers!

Cloyd Head's Grotesques

By Sheldon Cheney

"Grotesques, a Decoration in Black and White," was written by Cloyd Head, and produced briefly by the Chicago Little Theatre last season. It was daringly original in conception, and bravely poetic in handling. I say "bravely" because most American dramatists are literally afraid of the verse medium and of poetic delicacy of statement. Chicago critics, who have been gradually trained in appreciation of the finer things of the stage, were in general enthusiastic over the production; but the public, as usual when confronted with an original work of art, was puzzled, and soon stopped coming—for the originality did not border on either the bizarre or the risqué. The text, recently published in *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse*, makes clear why the plot-loving American audience lost interest; for the story of the play is not a little vague in outline, if indeed a story is there at all. Nevertheless, the text does prove that there is a new poet-dramatist of remarkable promise; and the production proved that not all purely poetic plays are destined to die unproduced.

The play is called "A Decoration in Black and White." The sub-title has misled many into believing that the production was conceived primarily as a visual spectacle, as a changing series of designs in black against white, or white against black. But "Grotesques" was not merely one more novel experiment in staging. It is true that the setting was a design in black and white, and that the figures moved always within their frame to make decorative groupings against the background. But the word "decoration" applies first, not to the outward presentation, but to the inner philosophy of the play. The whole decoration as seen is merely a symbol of life as a changing pattern of human relationships. Life is shown as a mere decoration in someone's hands, to be shaped this way or that by the whim of an unsympathetic power. Or is it that life, as commonly lived, is a void, in which only a rare god with the sense of design finds material for artistic fashioning?

The philosophy—since that largely takes the place of story—is set forth through six characters: Capulchard, and five Grotesques. The latter are called simply the Man-motive, the Woman-motive, the Girl-motive, the Sprite-motive, and the Crone-motive. The scene is "the theatre of the reader's imagination," and when the curtain "between the reader and the play"

is drawn upward, a conventionalized design of slender white trees against a black background is seen. Before this design, and behind a frame of gauze, the Grotesques are discovered, as yet inanimate. Behind them stands Capulchard, "master of the decoration."

At first this Capulchard appears to be a god, playing sardonically with the helpless Grotesques, at will giving them life and a place in the decoration, or quite as lightly erasing them from it. He is an artist-god, withal, one who properly hates anti-climax and the obvious, and who weaves the figures and their bits of life into true designs—having "tang," as he is somewhat overfond of saying. But gradually the revelation comes that he is merely a figure playing the god, achieving a certain permanence, and reverenced by the Grotesques, but later bowing to the real gods, the audience, whose priest he is. The figures, to whom he gives such vices and virtues as will make them true to character, at first speak blindly what he orders, and again as comprehending but willing tools; and occasionally—rare flashes of immortality!—they rebel and seek to make their own design. But they only learn—

> . . . . How slight
> A breath would puff them pell-mell into space,
> And free the canvas for a different theme . . . .

when Capulchard tears away their background and leaves them groping in a void. Nor is the tragedy that of the Grotesques only. The story of their doings is too episodic to bring unity to the series of designs; and it is rather Capulchard's tragedy in the end. A second or third reading brings the meaning even closer: that we, the audience, who are the ultimate gods, do not exert our divine imagination to compose life as an artist would; that the human mind, the true director of the decoration we call life, too often confuses the lines and spaces, lets the motives run wild, or fails to lift existence from the void to any plane that can be called design.

From such slender materials, from such intangible thoughts, does Cloyd Head weave his play. Can anything so elusive be made really intelligible and absorbing on the stage? The great American public was not interested. But that need not dishearten the poet. In these times when American dramatic art is in a wholly experimental phase, certain things are more important than interesting large audiences. If one can break a trail in a new direction, it is far more valuable than amusing people along the old overcrowded highways. In the theatre

Scene from "Grotesques"
Produced at the Chicago Little Theatre.
Design by Raymond Johnson.

Design by Joseph Urban for "Parsifal"

(See page 20)

just now it is important above all else if one stimulate artists, playwrights, poets, to think; if one impart the creative impulse; if one provide that rare moment of artistic enjoyment in which fellow-artists look along new vistas of imaginative thought, see new possibilities of applying art to life. Let us take the testimony of Harriet Monroe, as set down in *Poetry*, in an editorial worth pondering. She asks: "How did the Elizabethans feel when the young Shakespeare tried his first experiments on them? . . . . Was their little personal emotion, their pleasure of the moment, seized and swept on into timeless spaces of wonder and joy?" Something of this "larger thrill" she found in the production of "Grotesques." "Could it be that a young poet, here in boiling and bubbling Chicago, was seeing visions and setting them forth in a new strange form too beautiful to die? Was I listening to a bold interpreter of the mystery and poetry of life, one who felt and could suggest its magic and despair?" And again: "I paid to perfect art the tribute of spiritual exaltation."

How did the dramatist evoke that clearer atmosphere, that spiritual mood which is at once the rarest tribute and the most complete surrender to art? First, by being a poet. Taking the word in its narrower meaning, of one who weaves thought and story prettily in words, the text of "Grotesques" is witness to Cloyd Head's poetic talent. The audience must often have felt that here was a play worded not in the "journalese" of our Broadway dramatists, nor yet in the attenuated verse of a more delicate school of writers. I say "often" because Mr. Head is not *always* the finished poet; but he is well on the road to mastery of his poetic tools.

For sensuous beauty one might choose such lines as "Night and the stars, and silence in the wood"; or "The song, full-throated, dark and passionate"; or the longer-sustained—

> All moods of life in turn sweep through my heart.
> Each sings a moment, passes, and is gone,
> Like winds of evening, winds of night, and dawn.

Other passages stand out by reason of their color and music—particularly the love-scene beginning "This shall be our bed, O my beloved," and the Girl-motive's cry, "Only the cold white trees and the silver moon—"

Coupled with this use of the sensuous impression, with this image-making faculty, is (occasionally) that rarer gift of grasping the one inevitable phrase, of packing a little group of words with

a world of meaning. Thus, when the Man-motive speaks his faith and exclaims "Immortal life!" the Woman-motive answers "Death would not then be true." Almost as trenchant is the line of Capulchard when he plans final punishment: "Even the gods shall hesitate to laugh." Something of the same vigor and directness characterizes—

> Lock thy beauty by a thousand bars,
> That my one longing may give armies strength
> To find my way to thee. . . . .

That passage, to be sure, is too regular in the recurrence of accents, a fault too common in the play. Here, indeed, is my most serious criticism of the work. There is not enough freedom in the use of verse-form, not enough variation of rhythm. There is a curious mixture of passages with the sing-song monotony of unvaried blank verse lines, and passages in which the poet bursts out in his own free way and sings to the heart of his subject. It is as if the poem had been written in part during his student days and in part after he had discovered new rhythms unknown to the school books. It is possible to mark passage after passage in which there are too many end-stopped lines; and not infrequently there are lines in which the natural order has been changed obviously to bring the sing-song scansion right. These things make not only for monotony to the ear, but for lack of ease in character and action development.

A man must be more than poet to take possession of the stage. Cloyd Head is the artist of the theatre, and not of literature merely. Note how he is able to reveal character through a single phrase: The Man-motive, overcome with reverence for the gods, sees that it will be more fitting for the Girl to place a flower on the shrine, because—

> Your hands are pure and stainless as the light
> Reflected to the moon and seven stars.

And the simple child answers: "You like my hands?"

Story-interest is less stressed than philosophy. Even if the poet's philosophy is no more settled than one of his closing lines would indicate—"For naught is permanent—excepting change"—one feels that he has faced the deeper meanings squarely, and arrived at conclusions worth recording. The insistence upon the symbol of life as a decoration is, of course, the dominating note of the play.

> The end is not far distant either way;
> To left, to right, the picture has an edge.

And when Capulchard is ready to erase the setting, he speaks:

> **Then to new canvas and a different theme.**
> **Backgrounds are many as the stars themselves.**

The helpless position of the Grotesques in the decoration is ironically emphasized again and again: "Does the marionette grasp at its strings?"; and "The gods are kind, but wish to be amused."

There is food for thought in the poet's challenge of accepted conceptions of God. Capulchard is made to say that the gods require "not strength from you, but cowardice." And there is something of a sarcastic fling at the Browning philosophy when the impotent Man-motive is made to say weakly: "The gods watch over us, they guard us well; they have no other thought but for our good." And is there current comment in the phrase of Capulchard, when he speaks of his dressed-up soldier puppet as "the manikin in uniform"?

Cloyd Head believes that the time will come when a dramatist will be able to dispense entirely with story-interest, as the term is generally accepted, just as certain painters are approaching a decorative ideal without subject-interest. To be frank, I miss the unity which would have resulted from a story worked out by the Grotesques. It seems to me that there are too many interruptions by Capulchard, making the whole too episodic. It is, of course, part of the poet's intent, for he wished thereby to emphasize the helplessness of the characters. But I believe that he would have made even that point more effective by carrying a clearer story through the Grotesques portions, gaining greater contrast and heightened irony with Capulchard's final tearing away of the design. Mr. Head aimed to make a pattern, with his lines of story cut off in equal length; he might have gained if he had conceived the thing rather as design, with one dominating line running through.

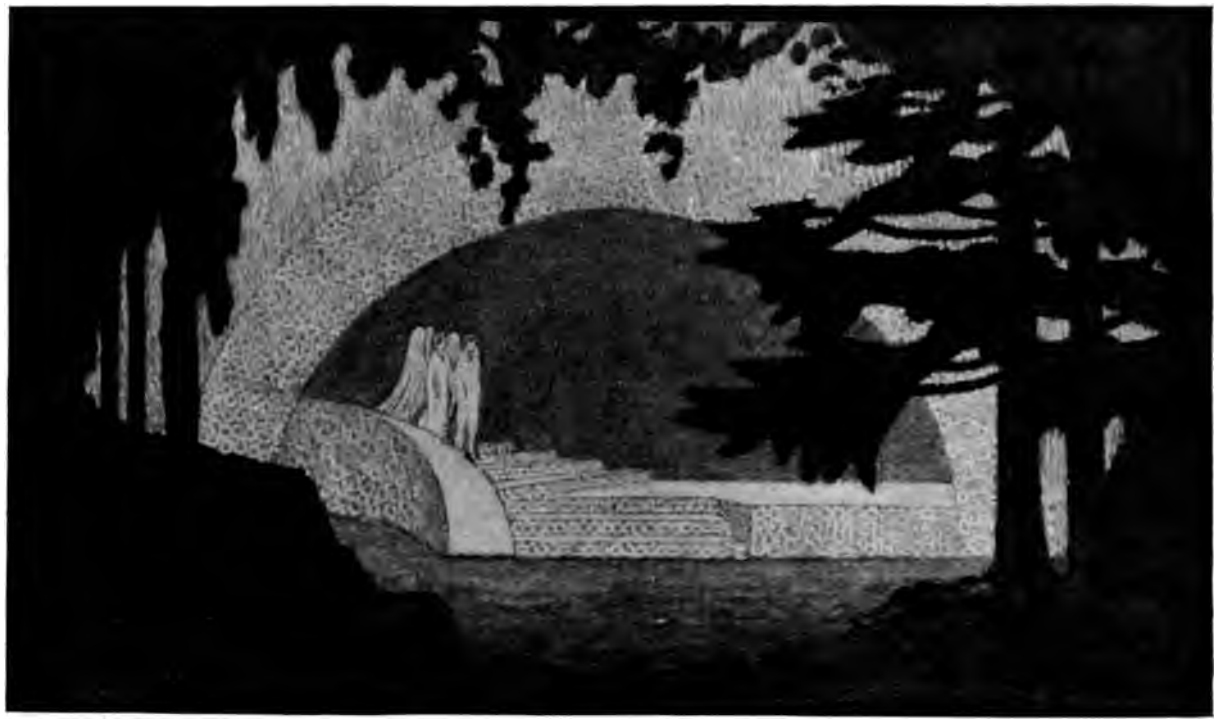
In the actual production one could see the fruit of another of Cloyd Head's ideas—what he has somewhere termed "group creation." With Maurice Browne, director of the Chicago Little Theatre, and Raymond Johnson, one of the really important of the younger designers, he was enabled to clothe his poetic play in just the right visual beauty. The conventionalized background, with its slender whites against solid black, had just the delicacy, just the symbolic unreality, needed to reënforce the theme. And Maurice Browne brought to the production that understanding of decorative grouping, of balanced stage "dressing,"

which has given a distinctive note to all the work at the Chicago playhouse.

The American theatre, then, has a new poet. As yet he has had but a glimpse into the magic possibilities of the stage. He dreamed his dream of what could be done in the theatre; he found his opportunity and seized it; he made an artistic success; but he has had to go back to selling books. There is a wide significance in the case of this young man who has had his one small success, after many years of endeavor, and who now returns to an unpoetic business. Will he let the business swallow him, as others have? Or will he dream again, and set his dreams on paper, and come knocking again at the theatre doors? Will the next producer he approaches prove as sympathetic and as discerning as Maurice Browne? Granted that he finds that margin of leisure necessary to creative thinking, I believe that Cloyd Head will again bring forward an original play, and a better one. It is the business of the little theatres to see that such men have their chance. The semi-professional playhouses should help them until they are able to coördinate their poetic and dramatic talents so perfectly that even the commercial producer will be convinced. Granted such help, I believe that Cloyd Head will bring something infinitely worth while, not only to the little playhouse, but to that larger commercial theatre which is still to be conquered by art.

Note on the Illustrations

It is part of the plan of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE to reprint pictures of the best stage settings hitherto designed by American artists. While keeping up with the best new work, we intend gradually to make the magazine a treasury of the older designs. In this issue we present, on page 16, Joseph Urban's drawing for the graal-scene in "Parsifal." While it was given space in the press of Paris, where the production took place, the picture is new to the American public.



Design by A. A. Andries
"Hansel und Gretel," Act II, Scene 2.

Design by A. A. Andries
"Othello," Act II, Scene 1.

The Stage Designs of A. A. Andries

TEN years ago the creative artist felt that scene-painting was a hopelessly degraded and commercialized part of the art field—if, indeed, it had anything at all to do with imaginative art. The scene-painter looked with equal suspicion at those opinionated youngsters who talked of pure art but who understood nothing of the limitations and time-honored methods of his highly specialized work. Happily the distrust has given way in both directions. The people of the theatre have discovered that there are better ways to create illusion than by the traditional methods, and that the imaginative artist can bring to the stage something of distinct value; and on the artist's side there has been a wholesome trend toward understanding of concrete stage problems.

Mr. A. A. Andries offers an example of the changed attitude of the art student toward the theatre, and of the new opportunity which the theatre offers to the artist. He was born in this country, and received his early education and art training here. He spent four years in Paris, studying and painting, and gained recognition to the extent of having a remarkably able decoration exhibited in the Salon. Before his return to America he began making sketches for stage settings. During a half-year in New York he made commercial sets "for experience." Just when he was gaining a foothold, he was suddenly compelled by personal matters to return to Detroit, his home city. During six months there he has made some notably interesting designs for operas and plays, and has built for the Arts and Crafts Theatre an interior setting of unusual decorative quality.

In this number we reproduce three of Mr. Andries' designs. The charm of color—and it is charming in all his work—is lost; but the sense of design, and the decorative touch, are preserved. It is interesting to note that the most elaborate of the three sketches, that for "Othello," is the earliest. The later ones are simpler and depend more on plastic, as opposed to pictorial, means.

Although he is only a beginner so far as actual work in the playhouse goes, we mark Mr. Andries as a man of coming achievement and fame in the theatre. We believe in him because he has taken his small successes of the past simply, because he is earnest in the desire to go on to bigger things, and lastly because he is an artist. There is room in the American theatre for several artists.

S. C.

William Poel in America

By Stephen Allard

William Poel, one of the best known of living artists of the theatre, is now in this country, and two American cities have had the privilege of seeing productions given under his personal direction. In Europe William Poel is not less known than Gordon Craig, Granville Barker and Max Reinhardt; but through the chances of fortune, and on account of the limitation of his producing to the field of revivals, his name is less familiar on this side of the Atlantic. He is the founder of the famous Elizabethan Stage Society of London, and he has directed its productions for many years. He is generally considered the foremost authority on questions concerning the Elizabethan theatre. In his attitude toward the modern theatre, he has been an uncompromising crusader against the commercialization of dramatic art.

In April of this year Mr. Poel produced Ben Jonson's "Poetaster" for the Elizabethan Stage Society in London. Shortly afterward he announced his definite retirement from the work of stage production. But certain American lovers of the theatre felt that this country should witness his unique method of reviving old English plays. Thomas Wood Stevens, director of the Dramatic Department of Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh, invited Mr. Poel to come to America, and to direct one or more productions at the Institute's theatre. A preliminary trip was made, and the producer looked over the situation, stipulated that he should be allowed to choose the play to be given, and sailed back to England. He finally decided upon a repetition of "Poetaster," and brought with him to America the costumes used in the London production.

His choice of "Poetaster" came as a surprise to those who know the play through reading. While it is known that the original production in 1601 took London by storm, the play has long been considered by scholars and readers to be the least actable, and the most confused in plot and thought, of all Jonson's works. Certainly it lacks almost completely those elements which are likely to make an Elizabethan revival (of the usual sort) interesting to present-day theatregoers. It is not distinguished by beautiful verse, or by poetry of thought, or by stirring story. The production by Mr. Poel, nevertheless, held American audiences absorbed from beginning to end.

When he arrived in Pittsburgh he immediately started a rigorous course of training for his actors, all students of the Dramatic Department of the Institute. There was no playing up of individualities in the training or the acting. The producer chose each actor according to a preconceived idea of the part to be played; and if the student did not accord at first he was molded by Mr. Poel until he met the exact requirement. There is at the Institute now a tradition about the man who had no time-sense when he became absorbed in rehearsing. But there is also a new conception of the meaning of "thoroughness" in dramatic production.

William Poel's conception of an Elizabethan theatre performance differs radically from that of certain dry-brained professors who have made "Elizabethan revival" a byword at the colleges. Instead of trying to reconstruct the outward semblance, the archæological detail, he set himself the task of finding what it was in the Elizabethan drama that could hold a crowd of "groundlings" absorbed for two solid hours. He had long ago mastered the scholarly side of the subject, and he knew that mere fidelity to detail would not hold either a seventeenth-century or a twentieth-century audience. He sought the solution in the *manner* of performance, in the *spirit* with which the director "put over" the play.

The production of "Poetaster" was pitched in the highest possible key. The costumes were gorgeous, the dialogue was spirited, the characterizations were pushed to a point approaching caricature. No stage trick was overlooked if it would help to make the play "move." The tension thus produced was such that the audience was kept continuously absorbed. Sometimes it was chuckling over a comedy bit, again it was delighting in a colorful stage picture, or again it was dreaming under the spell of an old song; but always its attention was riveted on the stage.

When the success of the production is analyzed, it seems to lie in a *tour-de-force* of stage management. No one remembers the story—if indeed, any connected plot could be recognized during the action—and there is no recollection of lines beautiful in themselves. The *method* of production was everything. In William Poel's revival of "Poetaster" there is a real contribution to the history of theatre art; and many a student in the audience has begun to see the whole Elizabethan drama in a new light.

Of all the beauties of the production none was more gratefully received than the trained modulation of speech throughout. Remembering the average voice of the student-actor—need one

say "student"?—one wonders where this newcomer found such well-trained voices. Here again is a peculiarity of William Poel's conception of Elizabethan drama. A certain type of voice, he explains, meant to the theatregoer a certain type of character. To the producer a group of carefully chosen actors offered a range of voices to be played upon, much as an orchestra offers a range of tone and timbre to the conductor. And William Poel playing upon the voices of American students wrought a miracle. He had chosen each actor as a type of speaker, and then had spent days and weeks developing in each the quality he had first detected. Those who have worried much over the horrors of the American's acting voice, found in the production relief from their pessimism over the future of American acting. If William Poel can do so much with raw material in a few weeks, there is still hope for some of the professionals.

The setting was a platform before black curtains, parted to show a balcony above. Frequent entrances were made through the auditorium. The actual play was preceded by songs given by choir-boys, and incidental music was occasionally used. The costumes are said to have been absolutely true to the life of the times; more important than that, they were true to atmosphere—brilliant, harmonious, picturesque but not bizarre. In choosing the actors no distinction was made in the matter of sex. A girl played the part of Cæsar, and the convention was accepted, and forgotten, immediately. As for the story, that is entirely unessential to a review, as it was to the production. It is easy to remember that it was some sort of satire, and that Virgil was there, dressed to suggest Shakespeare, together with Ovid, Horace, and less celebrated folk. But what they did completely eludes the memory.

The performance of "Poetaster" may well mark a stage in the development of a certain type of production in this country. Certainly we who saw the performance will never again be satisfied with the slow, academic—and, we believe, untrue—revivals of other days. One wonders how the universities that in the past have had something of a reputation in the revival field, can let Mr. Poel escape back to England, with his costumes and his genius, before they have seen him at work. Not only to the student of the archæology of the theatre, but to the mere seeker for pleasure, he has brought a rare delight and a unique stimulus.

Scene from "Brown," *as produced at The Players Workshop, Chicago. Design by J. Blanding Sloan.*

Costume Sketches by Robert E. Jones
For "Caliban of the Yellow Sands."
By courtesy of "The Craftsman."

Note on the Costumes for "Caliban of the Yellow Sands"

No PRODUCTION of recent years has been more widely reviewed, and more talked of, than "Caliban of the Yellow Sands." Every magazine has published its criticism, and every writer on the theatre, the pageant or civic spirit has set down his estimate of the masque's importance. But the accompanying costume sketches, taken from the pages of a recent number of *The Craftsman*, take us back to a consideration of the most successful element of the giant spectacle: Robert E. Jones' costuming.

These drawings suggest that the designer approached his work not as a studio artist, but as a man of the theatre, thoroughly understanding the difficulty of relating stage design to an immense auditorium. It is one of the pathetic failures of many open-air masques and pageants that custumes which are delicately beautiful when closely viewed, lose their effectiveness at the distance of the audience. It is clear that if one can make the design stand out boldly on a figure drawn two inches high on white paper, the audience will be able to see it in man-size even at a distance of two hundred feet. We reprint the drawings for the benefit of theatre artists and students, recommending thorough consideration of this one matter of scale.

The six little figures were drawn by Mr. Jones, and are reproduced by courtesy of *The Craftsman*.

The Art Societies and Theatre Art

DURING one month this autumn, two American art organizations took possession of new buildings, each containing a complete little theatre. Both structures were planned primarily for the usual exhibition purposes; but in both cases the directors made sacrifices in other directions in order to make room for auditorium and stage. The significance of this attitude of the artists can hardly be overestimated. It means that the outcast among the arts is to be recognized again. The theatre artist is to be allowed to work shoulder to shoulder with the painter, the sculptor and the craftsman. These other artists, moreover, are to be allowed to bring their work to the stage, and to experiment there under ideal conditions.

That the art societies have re-discovered the theatre does not mean a radical or immediate change in American dramatic institutions. To have the professional stage in the hands of artists who are only amateurs in the playhouse would be as unfortunate as the present system of putting everything into the hands of business men. But in these new buildings a seed has been sown which is bound to yield fruit in years to come. It means that a certain number of painters and craftsmen will graduate, after experiments in their little theatres, to the position of worker on the professional stage. Thus, slowly but surely, the sister-arts will lend a helping hand to the drama, the one of them all that fell farthest and began its recovery last.

For many years there have been auditoriums, and stages of a sort, in art buildings. Occasionally the stages have been "decorated" with stock "scenery"—painted backdrop, cut borders, and all. The distinguishing feature of the theatres just installed by the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, and the St. Louis Artists Guild, is a stage designed and equipped according to the most enlightened conceptions of stagecraft.

The new building of the Society of Arts and Crafts of Detroit contains the usual exhibition halls, offices, and social rooms, as well as workshops for a limited number of craftsmen. The theatre portion includes the auditorium, stage, two sets of dressing rooms, costume rooms, and property rooms. The stage is unusually large, with ample working space at each side. It is backed by an adaptation of the "sky-dome," which so far has been installed in only one other American theatre. This background, built of plaster on metal frame, is laterally straight, running the entire

width of the stage; and it rises straight from the floor for several feet, then curving gently forward over the rear-stage. The electric equipment is notable for its flexibility, and for the amount of power available; and it includes, of course, the now indispensable dimmers. A permanent setting has been installed, consisting of a dignified arrangement of pylons and draperies, which, when used in conjunction with the sky-dome, makes an exquisite background for poetic plays, concerts and other functions. All the stage equipment was designed by Sam Hume, and installed under his personal direction.

The auditorium achieves a certain informality and intimacy of atmosphere that are charming, and the decoration is unusually subdued and successful. The construction is unique in that the orchestra is built on three levels, with balcony above. This arrangement is less satisfactory than a floor with uniform slope, but the architects had to consider that the room must be used at times as a supplementary exhibition hall, and the three-level floor seemed the wisest compromise. The architects of the building were H. J. Maxwell Grylls and William B. Stratton. The decorative scheme was devised by Mrs. Sidney Corbett Jr.

The Little Theatre of the Artists Guild in St. Louis is smaller than the Detroit playhouse, and the stage seems very cramped. But structurally the auditorium here is more interesting than the other. Again it was a matter of compromise, as the auditorium must on occasion serve as an art gallery. On account of connection with adjoining galleries, the front half of the floor was laid flat. The other half, however, is installed on an ingenious tilting device, so that the back can be raised to a point assuring perfect sight-lines. Above at the back is a small gallery, built permanently with a slope.

The stage has more fly-room than that at Detroit, but otherwise is less satisfactory from the producer's standpoint. In answer to strictures on the smallness of the stage, a St. Louis critic writes of "an outdoor scene beautifully staged and exquisitely lighted, with as many as fifteen people on the stage at one time. There was no crowding, no inadequacy, nothing lacking to a picture which hardened wretches in the theatres of St. Louis said they had never seen equalled in beauty anywhere else."

In the dedicatory plays both theatres proved the value of the alliance between art society and stage. Men whose stage designs previously had been confined largely to sketches on paper, were given opportunity to work in canvas and paint, and to see their work in unrelentiug stage light; others, who had never before

considered the theatre a field for creative endeavor, found a new and exciting problem in devising appropriate setting and lighting; and local playwrights saw their works in actual production—which, after all, is the best way to learn playwriting.

In St. Louis the directors of the Artists Guild called in David Carb to take charge of the opening bill. With amateur and semi-professional material he produced four short plays. The critics were unanimous in conceding that he had in a few short weeks built up a company with professional finish, and that he worked miracles in the staging and lighting. The feature of the bill was the poetic play "Behind a Picture by Watteau." After the opening series, the theatre was leased to local dramatic organizations.

The dedicatory performances at the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit likewise featured poetic production, being designed in part to show the possibilities of the stage. Lord Dunsany's "The Tents of the Arabs," and "The Wonder Hat," by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht, were played before variations of the permanent setting. Two realistic plays gave variety and balance to the bill. Again the actors were almost entirely amateurs, and again they were so thoroughly trained and directed that the production showed none of the rough edges of the usual amateur "show." In freshness of atmosphere, moreover, and in imaginative illusion, it far surpassed most professional productions. The series was directed by Sam Hume, who brings to such work a rare combination of artistic insight and executive ability.

Doubtless other art societies will follow the lead of those at St. Louis and Detroit. One wonders, indeed, if alliance with such organizations will not be the ultimate solution of the whole little theatre question. It still is doubtful whether a little theatre can make good financially in competition with the commercial theatres. Perhaps the provision of stage and auditorium by societies not seeking return on the investment will lift the burden of overhead expense, under which so many organizations have failed, and yet make possible the two important results of independent little theatre work: experiment in new forms of drama and staging, and the training of creative artists in the mechanics of the stage, resulting in the graduation of men of vision into the regular theatre. At any rate, association with the idealists and recognized artists of the community cannot fail to bring wholesome elements into the playhouse.

S. A.

The Arts and Crafts Building, Detroit

This building, which contains a complete little theatre, was opened in November. On the next page we reproduce photographs from "The Tents of the Arabs" and "The Wonder Hat," as seen at the dedicatory performances. These were played before variations of the permanent setting, one scene representing "the gates of the City of Thalanna" and the other "a park by moonlight." The setting was designed by Sam Hume, who directed the productions. He was assisted by Judson Smith in the design for "The Tents of the Arabs."

Two Settings by Sam Hume

For "The Tents of the Arabs" and "The Wonder Hat." (See preceding page)

Progress of the Theatre Arts

THE Wisconsin Players have left their playhouse in Milwaukee to tour the principal cities of the East and Middle West. They opened a four-weeks season at the Chicago Little Theatre on November 14, and they will be seen later in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and other cities that have shown interest in live native drama. The repertory includes nine plays, all by Wisconsin authors. The organization approaches closer than any other to the ideal sketched by Lady Gregory, when she said that the development of American drama depended upon the creation of sectional theatres devoted to native plays. The present building of the Wisconsin Players contains workshops and an experimental stage, and in the spring an addition is to be built which will contain a complete little theatre.

At the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, Miss Gertrude Kingston, pioneer artist of the little theatre movement in England, produced in November a group of three plays: Shaw's "Great Catherine," Lord Dunsany's "The Queen's Enemies," and the anonymous "Inca of Perusalem." On December 9 the Neighborhood Players will open their regular season with "The Married Woman" by Chester Bailey Fernald. The company will revive during the year Lord Dunsany's "A Night at an Inn," Violet Pearn's "Wild Birds," and the dance-pantomime "Petrouchka."

On November 16 the new Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit, was opened with a group of four one-act plays: "Sham" by Frank G. Tompkins, "The Tents of the Arabs" by Lord Dunsany, "The Bank Account" by Howard Brock, and "The Wonder Hat" by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht.

The Washington Square Players of New York, having outgrown the Bandbox Theatre, recently moved to the larger Comedy Theatre. The regular season opened with four one-act plays: "The Sugar House" by Alice Brown, "Lover's Luck" from the French of Georges de Porto Riche, "A Merry Death" from the Russian of Nicholas Evreinov, and "Sisters of Susanna" by Philip Moeller. The company has grown to such proportions that a division has been made, one group staying at the home theatre and the other going on tour with ten of the most successful of last season's plays.

Serge de Diaghileff's Ballet Russe, after a short engagement in New York in October, started on a tour which will cover the entire country, from New England to California, and from Texas to Canada. The featured dancers are Nijinsky, Lopokova, Flore Revalles and Adolf Bohm. The repertory includes the best known of the company's dance-dramas and mimo-dramas, including Schéherazade, L'Après-midi d'un Faune, Le Spectre de la Rose, Prince Igor, Narcisse, and Les Sylphides.

Schools for the art of the theatre continue to multiply. The Washington Square Players have established regular courses in all branches of dramatic study, and have taken quarters for the educational work close by their theatre. The Chicago Little Theatre has announced the establishment of a School of Dramatic Art, to train players to fill vacancies in its own company and in other theatres. The Department of Dramatic Arts of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, the most thorough of all schools of the sort, will enter upon its third year this winter.

"The Yellow Jacket," which, since New York's failure to appreciate it a few years ago, has been seen in all the leading European cities, was revived on the New York stage by the Coburn Players in November. It is promised to other Eastern and Middle Western cities during the winter.

Miss Grace Griswold has published a pamphlet entitled "Steps Towards a National Theatre," in which she outlines a plan for a permanent Shakespeare memorial, to take the form of "a workshop and showcase—a mart and a school for the benefit of players, playwrights, artists, managers and public." The immediate object is to establish a dramatic laboratory in New York, which in time would become a national "University of the Theatre."

The Stage Society plans to show honor to Rabindranath Tagore, during his visit to New York, by producing his "Chitra," with Alla Nazimova heading the cast.

The Artists Guild of St. Louis has built a little theatre in connection with its galleries and club rooms. A special cast gave the dedicatory production November 11, under the direction of David Carb. Later the theatre was leased to the Little Playhouse Company, which will offer a regular season of productions under the direction of Clinton J. Masseck.

The Players, who for more than twenty-seven years have been presenting amateur productions in Providence, gave their last performance in the old Talma Theatre in June. With the larg-

est membership in its history, the organization has launched a plan for building a "laboratory theatre." As a preliminary step a store has been converted into a dramatic studio, with a stage and workshops for experiment and rehearsals.

The famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin was uninjured during the recent Irish Revolt, but the Irish Players have scattered, and there is at present no prospect of resuming productions at the theatre. The men of the company are for the most part at the front, and many of the women are playing in Australia, the United States and elsewhere.

Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, "the theatre that comes to you," is on tour in the Eastern states, under Mr. Walker's personal direction. New plays have been added to the repertory, including the best by Lord Dunsany, and new sets have been made by Frank Zimmerer for some of the productions.

As a permanent memorial of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Festival in Boston, the committee in charge has planned to build in the Fens a "Shakespeare Village," to be used as a public recreation center. The plans have been drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown, and a campaign to secure funds is now under way.

With the Theatre Artists

DURING the current season Robert Jones has designed two settings for the Ballet Russe, and two for Arthur Hopkins' productions of "The Happy Ending" and "Good Gracious Annabelle." He is now at work on sets for a series of one-act episodes to be produced by Mr. Hopkins under the auspices of the Drama League of America.

Mrs. Josephine H. Clement, well known for her interesting experiments in producing one-act plays at the Bijou Theatre, Boston, will hereafter act as general manager of the Chicago Little Theatre.

Richard Ordynski has gone to Los Angeles, to be associated with the Players Producing Company at the Little Theatre.

Pavlowa is dancing at the Hippodrome, New York, in connection with the usual sort of circus-drama to be seen there. While the critics praise her individual work, it seems agreed that the ballet as a whole, and the settings by Leon Bakst, are a failure artistically. Bakst did not come to America to direct the execution of his designs.

At the Little Theatres

THE Chicago Little Theatre opened its season on October 17 with "Mary Broome," a comedy by Allan Monkhouse. Other plays announced are "Mr. Faust" by Arthur Davison Ficke, and "Deborah" by Lascelles Abercrombie. The theatre's puppet season opened November first, and will continue with three daytime performances each week, thus avoiding conflict with the regular productions. On November 15 the Little Theatre company moved to The Playhouse (formerly the Fine Arts Theatre) for a limited season. The repertory for this engagement includes Shaw's "The Philanderer" and "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and a group of Greek plays, in Gilbert Murray's translations. During the company's temporary absence from the Little Theatre, the Wisconsin Players will present there a group of plays from its repertory.

The Prairie Playhouse, Galesburg, Illinois, opened its second season early in November with the following group of one-act plays: "At Slovsky's" by Winifred Hawkridge, "The Rose" by Mary Macmillan, and "The Terrible Meek" by Charles Rann Kennedy. The second production will be Shaw's "Candida," to be followed in December by an original Christmas fantasy. The theatre is now owned by the Galesburg Center of the Drama League of America, and is directed by Mr. J. A. Crafton.

The Little Playhouse Company of Cincinnati opened the season with Edouard Pailleron's "The Art of Being Bored." The Company owns its own playhouse, and produces one bill each month under the direction of Mrs. Helen Schuster-Martin.

The Players Workshop of Chicago, which limits its activities to first productions of plays by Chicago authors, produced in September "The Hero of Santa Maria" by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht, and "Dregs" by Ben Hecht. The October bill was comprised of "Civilization" by Elisha Cook, "Snow-White" by Marie L. Marsh, and "The War Game" by Alice Gerstenberg and Rienzi de Cordova. The November group was "The Magnet" by Mary Corse, "The Man" by Oren Taft Jr., and "The Pot Boiler" by Alice Gerstenberg. We are reproducing in this issue a setting designed by J. Blanding Sloan for the Players Workshop summer production of "Brown," a play by Ben Hecht.

The Players Club of San Francisco has re-made its clubhouse into a little theatre, which was opened in October with this bill:

"The Sidhe of Ben Mor" by Ruth Sawyer, "The Cradle Song" by Adrian Metzger, "The Maker of Dreams" by Oliphant Downs, and "The Spoils of War" by Hilliard Booth. The November offering is Stephen Phillips' "Paolo and Francesca." Other scheduled plays are Shaw's "Major Barbara" and d'Annunzio's "The Daughter of Jorio."

The Little Theatre Society of Indiana, after failing to establish a true little theatre in Indianapolis last season, has reorganized. On October tenth it produced a pageant-play entitled "Centennial Cycle of Works by Indiana Authors." In November Mr. Carl Bernhardt was appointed director, and he is now busy with plans for regular productions through the winter and spring.

The Lake Forest Players presented in October "The Magical City" by Zoë Akins, and "Thieves' Honor" by Frank Tompkins. The playhouse will be closed until spring.

The Little Theatre, New York, opened the season with "Hush," a comedy by Violet Hearn. This gave way in November to the notable revival of "Pierrot the Prodigal," a pantomime which, as "L'Enfant Prodigue," has been an international favorite for many years, and which had its first American production in the days of Augustin Daly and Ada Rehan. Other productions scheduled for the Little Theatre are Masefield's "The Faithful," and a dramatization by Granville Barker of "The Wrong Box," by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osborne. For afternoon performances Winthrop Ames plans to import the puppets of the famous Munich Marionette Theatre.

The Toy Theatre, Boston, one of the pioneer little theatres of America, failed to open its doors this season, and there is no prospect of an early resumption of its activities.

The Los Angeles Little Theatre, after many vicissitudes, has been taken over by the Players Producing Company, which made a noted success of certain productions in Chicago and New York last season. Miss Aline Barnsdall, the director, has called in Irving Pichel and Norman-Bel Geddes for the work of stage management and scenic design. The first bill of a ten-weeks season included a one-act play by Oren Taft Jr., entitled "Conscience," and "Macaire" by Robert Louis Stevenson and William Ernest Henley. Miss Barnsdall later secured the services of Richard Ordynski, who went to Los Angeles to produce "Nju" by Ossip Dymow. The Little Theatre will hereafter have two acting companies, an Eastern one directed by Richard Ordynski, and one composed of Californians under the direction of Herbert Heron.

The Theatre Bookshelf

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE THEATRE. Anonymous. This book does not tell the whole truth about the theatre. It sets forth the worst evils of theatre life with the false assumption that they are universally prevalent. The author is not always reliable, moreover, in his recording of particularized incidents. Nevertheless it is a book that every student of the art of the theatre should read. It strips the subject of all the glamour and romance of the fiction writers and outside observers, and it shows forth clearly the grim conditions under which the worker for an art of the theatre must often struggle. The author avowedly went into the theatre with the ideals of an artist; but he allowed himself to be swallowed by the business side of the organization, and became a mere cog in a commercial system. He writes in a disillusioned and embittered vein, as every man must who sacrifices his ideals to circumstances.

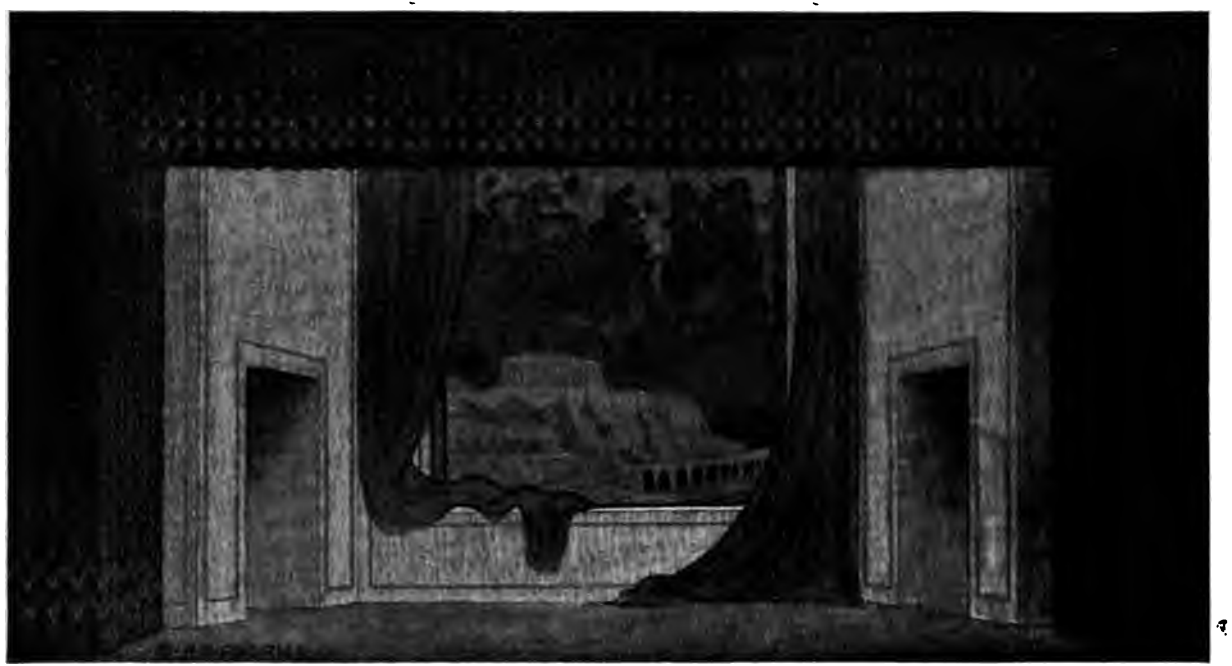
Throughout the book there is sincerity—a genuine desire to keep others from making the mistake he made. Indeed, there is real tragedy in the career behind the book: and the tragedy of the writer reflects clearly the tragedy of the American theatre of the last quarter-century. It is that he accepted the playhouse as he found it, degraded and commercialized, without struggling to change it; that he forgot the nobility and dignity of it, living on from a better time; and that he was ignorant of the force for betterment that was rising in the little theatres and semi-professional groups, and even finding reflection on Broadway.

The author purposely neglects the bright side of theatre life, with its legitimate pleasures and the rewards it brings to the true artist. While recognizing this one-sidedness, we recommend the book, hoping that it will make the young artist set his teeth the harder for the coming conflict, that it will hasten the conquest of that ugly thing which has stood for the theatre in America for so long—insecure for the actor, unjust to the playwright, without place for the inspired craftsman or poet, with a cut-throat policy toward every innovating producer, serving commerce to the detriment of art. (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company. $1.00.)

PRACTICAL STAGE DIRECTING FOR AMATEURS, by Emerson Taylor, is an elementary book of instructions, designed particularly for schools, colleges, and clubs devoted to "dramatics." It should prove useful to teachers and "coaches" who direct the producing of amateur organizations; but it is far too elementary to be of service to artists of the professional or little theatres. The author sticks to a few outworn superstitions; he uses as frontispiece a stage diagram showing the old arrangement of wings, with the old hieroglyphics R. U. E., L. L. E., etc.; and he gives the damnable advice that the actor should not be supplied with a full script of the play to be produced, receiving instead only his "bit." But in general he is quite progressive and intelligent, insisting upon the importance of ensemble acting, of concentrating power in the director, and of using suggestion rather than imitation in setting. He very welcomely emphasizes the difference between acting lines and reciting them. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $1.00.)

THE ANTIQUE GREEK DANCE, by Maurice Emmanuel, is now made accessible to English readers in a poor translation. Coming just after Arnold Genthe's remarkable "Book of the Dance," the volume challenges attention by

Design by Hermann Rosse *for the stage of an open-air theatre. The pylons and hangings, with the vista through rows of trees at the back, form an unusually interesting arrangement. The use of pylons solves the most difficult problem to be met by the outdoor producer: the concealment of light-sources in sufficient number to flood the entire stage with light. The theatre was designed for a masque to be given in San Francisco, but was not built.*



Design by A. A. Andries

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," Act I, Scene 1.

(See page 23)

contrast. The other is purely inspirational, while this is didactic and historical; the other is in itself a work of art, while this is a poorly printed textbook, with illustrations profuse but unattractive. Yet the book is distinctly valuable.

The author begins with the hypothesis that, while human anatomy remains the same, the modern dance must obey certain fundamental laws that governed the antique dance. He first analyzes the modern French dance, or ballet, and then reconstructs the ancient Greek dance to prove that the mechanics are the same. He has covered the field with German thoroughness, searching the works of ancient authors, and seeking in all the world's classic museums. His text is illustrated with over six hundred drawings, taken chiefly from vases and statuary.

It may be better to learn through practice than through theory; but sooner or later every great artist must master the theory of his art. The seeker for theoretical knowledge will find certain parts of this book negligible; and he will find consecutive reading of the entire text unendurable. But portions he will find exceedingly helpful — not to copy, but to study with open mind. We can imagine an artist dancer going through the book with delight, confirming an independent opinion here, catching a new meaning in a pictured gesture there, and seeing in the whole new proof that art is a matter of mechanics as well as of vision.

The author does not give rules for dancing. He merely tries to show forth the fundamental rhythms, and the natural positions and motions, which he believes have lived on from Greek times to the twentieth century. In studying his conclusions judiciously, the professional dancer must gain a new breadth of view, and sureness; while the general reader must gain a new impression of the seriousness of dancing as an art. One only regrets that the valuable portions of the book are wrapped in much that is dull and unattractive, and that the translator could not brighten, instead of befog, the whole. (New York: John Lane Company. $3.00.)

A Book About the Theatre, by Brander Matthews. We prefer to take this book's epitaph from its own pages. When Professor Matthews wrote of "an academic investigator into the arid annals of dogmatic disquisition about the drama," and again of an author "laboring to lift into temporary importance the eternally unimportant," he penned the fittest criticisms of his own latest work. A more dogmatic book, and one dealing with more unimportant phases of an important subject, is yet to appear. Here are sample chapters: The Ideal of the Acrobat, Dramatic Collaboration, The Method of Modern Magic, The Utility of the Variety Show, Women Dramatists, The Show Business, and The Decline and Fall of Negro Minstrelsy. With unruffled seriousness, and with graceful touch, the author weaves amiable trivialities about these themes. In four-fifths of its pages the book is typical small-talk — gossipy, inconsequential, crammed with facts of no value. The material that is worth while may be found in three or four chapters — particularly "The Evolution of Scene Painting," "The Principles of Pantomime," and "The Puppet Play." There is occasional food for thought in these, and considerable historical material that is not easily accessible elsewhere.

Professor Matthews' curt dismissal of Gordon Craig, together with the whole enlightened group of modern stage designers, is a remarkable revelation of the author's incapacity to grasp what is new and significant, and of smug satisfaction with the past.

"Little things please little minds." We recommend the book to the old women of the theatre — and of the universities. The student of the theatre will do well to read the chapters indicated, but only at times when he is seeking historical background, and not stimulus. Stirring up revolutionary thoughts is not one of Professor Matthews' faults. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50.)

TRAINING FOR THE STAGE, by Arthur Hornblow, is a first-aid text for those who would break into the theatre game as it is played in New York. The author is editor of *The Theatre*, and is well acquainted with Broadway theatre life in every aspect. Out of the fullness of his experience he has set down much that will prove valuable to the beginner. Although he has the true metropolitan attitude, judging largely by money standards, and with the usual contempt for everything outside New York, he sees clearly that the theatre has been commercialized and that the actor's art is being degraded. Every would-be actor will find the volume worth reading; and we recommend the chapter on "The Actor's Voice" to the average American player who already has found a place on the stage. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. $1.25.)

THE LYRIC, by John Drinkwater. Here is an interesting statement of one poet's beliefs about his art. It has the merit of brevity (one can read it thoughtfully within an hour), and it is clearer than most attempts to analyze the character of poetry — for after all, the lyric is poetry in its essence. We might quarrel with the author's insistence upon the importance of regular verse forms and of rhyme. It seems to be fencing the field short of much that is beautiful and satisfying. But the writers of textbooks have to concern themselves more with the traditional and the accepted than with the movements that are pushing, sometimes vainly, against established barriers. And this is a textbook, albeit one of unusual charm of statement, and for the most part lucid.

The volume is one of the "Art and Craft of Letters" series. We have received the uniform "The Short Story," by Barry Pain, but pass it by as having little place on the theatre bookshelf. (New York: George H. Doran Company. $.40.)

A BOOK FOR SHAKESPEARE PLAYS AND PAGEANTS, by Orie Latham Hatcher, is described by the publishers, quite accurately, as "a treasury of Elizabethan and Shakespearean detail for producers, actors, artists and students, describing Elizabethan life and customs, the costumes, sports, buildings, court festivities, the stage and drama, the songs and music of the period." While we feel that historical works are never as significant as inspirational ones, we must grant that the author has collected a surprising amount of valuable material. In producing we deprecate the piling up of historical detail, to the smothering of poetic and dramatic effect; but we insist that every production should be true enough to the historical not to be noticeably inharmonious. Miss Hatcher has made it possible for producers to be decently accurate without owning a whole roomful of reference books. Without subscribing to all that the author writes, or fails to write, about the pageant, we mark the book as one that every theatre worker should own. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $2.00.)

The New Published Plays

MODERN ICELANDIC PLAYS, by Johann Sigurjonsson. The first play in this volume, "Eyvind of the Hills," has stirred us as have few dramas published in recent years. The characters, breaking away from the circumscribed life of everyday mortals, carry the reader with them to regions of clearer air and finer perceptions. The whole play is filled with what is strong, elemental, and clear-visioned, with that heroic quality which world-drama sorely needs. There would be difficulties in setting it on the stage, just as there are difficulties in getting a sufficient perspective to read it clearly and judge it justly. But for the theatre artist who succeeded in placing it before an audience with all its freedom and bigness preserved, there would be a mighty satisfaction. If we are to have poets of this mould, the heroic drama may yet come back to take its place in the world—and perhaps come back embracing the elemental romance of modern life.

The other play in the volume is interesting, but is not cast in the same mould as "Eyvind." The translation in both cases is clean-cut and poetic. (New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation. $1.50.)

SIX PLAYS OF THE YIDDISH THEATRE is a collection of one-act plays, ranging from Biblical romance and idle farce to tragic realism, translated from the originals by Isaac Goldberg. Belonging to the art of a scattered people, which nevertheless has intense race consciousness, they will interest students of folk drama and of comparative literature. But they are so far dependent on knowledge of Yiddish custom, and so far lack dramatic intensity, that they are not likely to find a wide welcome on the American stage. The grimmest bit of all, Perez Hirschbein's "In the Dark," might well be tried in some of the experimental theatres; and others, when played by Jews, would make interesting contributions to the programs of the neighborhood playhouses. (Boston: John W. Luce and Company. $1.50.)

THE WOMAN WHO WOULDN'T, by Rose Pastor Stokes. This book affords one more proof that the drama bookshelf must he extended to include some books that are worth the writing and the reading, but that have nothing to do with the theatre. The first two acts have the material for a poignant realistic play, although handled with the novelist's rather than the dramatist's touch. But the third act is an appendix of pure propaganda, and never could be disguised for acting. Readers who are not afraid of trenchant social thought will find the volume well worth two hours' time. But those who want drama, with its swift action, its deft characterization, and its directness of statement, must look elsewhere. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. $1.25.)

MOLOCH, by Beulah Marie Dix, is prefaced by the publisher with the description "unmistakably the finest play that the war has so far produced." Perhaps. But we doubt whether the war has yet inspired any drama that will be lastingly great. The faults of "Moloch" are looseness of construction, melodrama, and something of that self-consciousness which is the curse of the American dramatist. One too often feels that the author is manipulating the strings. Still the play does not suffer seriously in comparison with Artzibashef's "War" and similar dramatizations of contemporary European civilization. It is effectively horrible, powerful and entertaining; but it is not a "world" play, nor is it, we hope, the best that is to come from Miss Dix' pen. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $1.00.)

MORAL, by Ludwig Thoma, a classic of the modern German realistic drama, now appears in a translation by Charles Recht. It treats entirely effectively and unobjectionably with prostitution as practiced among the higher-ups, and exposes hypocrisy to keen satire. The spirit of comedy—quite Gallic in touch at times—pervades the play, making it more entertaining than most propaganda pieces. Although occasionally slow and talky, it should appeal to those producers who make a specialty of the "Mrs. Warren's Profession" type of drama. We wonder which of the "progressive" little theatres will discover it first. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $1.00.)

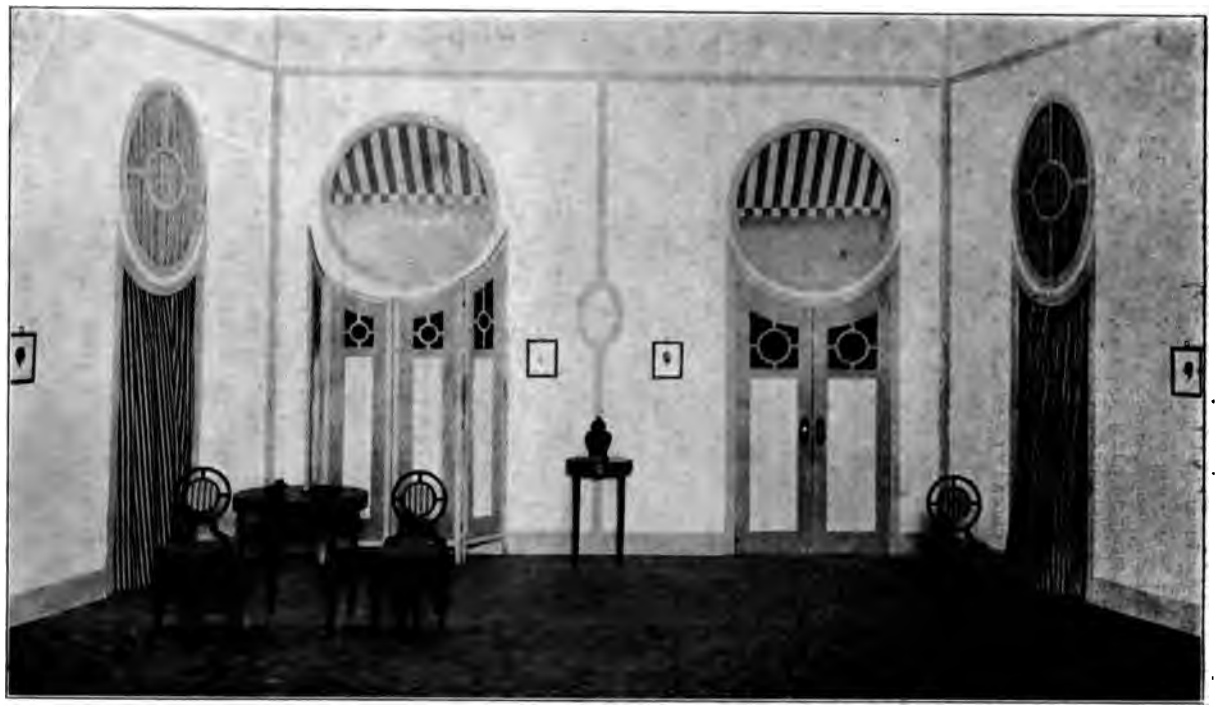
THE GOLDEN APPLE, A Play for Kiltartan Children, by Lady Gregory. This is a child's fairy tale, done into dialogue and published in the form of a child's book, with colored illustrations. It has felicity of expression, and the true Irish tang of the soil, but it will prove less interesting to grown-ups than any one of Lady Gregory's other books. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. $1.25.)

WAR, by Michael Artzibashef. In these days of war, when the newspapers carry so much of wholesale tragedy, it seems curious that a play of one family's sufferings could bring a keen emotional reaction. Yet this powerful, if ill-constructed, drama does stir the reader deeply. It is by no means the best of the war plays, and it will add little to the author's growing fame. It is big, powerful, simple, and probably unactable—but readable, if one likes two such unpleasant themes as sex and war realistically mingled. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $1.00.)

THE FRUIT OF TOIL, AND OTHER ONE-ACT PLAYS, by Lillian P. Wilson, is a collection of dramatic episodes, brief, imaginative, and too often tinged with sentimentality. The author has a gift for grasping the dramatic, but insufficient understanding of play technique to make her sketches effective. The crucial incident, the breathless moment, is usually there; but she should study preparation, the leading of the reader (or audience) through a series of events of increasing intensity. The volume shows great promise rather than achievement. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.)

THE HATE-BREEDERS, by Ednah Aiken. This is an indictment of the war-lords, tricked out in dramatic form. In literary quality better than most acted plays, and powerful as a document in peace propaganda, it is impossible of production in a theatre. The author started with an original idea, which might have been made intensely dramatic. But she exhibits little knowledge of what is physically possible on the stage, or of the economy of means necessary to the building of a drama. The book is worth reading if one is still in the field for war literature. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. $0.75.)

We have received also, too late for review in this issue, the following: SIXTY YEARS OF THE THEATRE, by John Ranken Towse (Funk and Wagnalls, $1.50); THE NAMELESS ONE, by Anne Cleveland Cheney (Stokes, $1.00); and CHARLES FROHMAN, MANAGER AND MAN, by Isaac F. Marcosson and Daniel Frohman (Harpers, $2.00).



Designed by Robert Lamson
for the Washington Square Players, for a scene from "The Honorable Lover."

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated quarterly published in November, February, May and August by SHELDON CHENEY under the auspices of the Theatre Committee of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, Michigan.

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Editorial

HAVE the progressives in the theatre made any real headway against the old foes—commercialism and traditionalism? Are the enthusiastic workers or the pessimistic critics right? This issue was to carry an essay which would attempt to answer these questions, a sort of recapitulation entitled "The Present State of the Theatre Arts in America." But space remains for only a brief summary. Our view of the theatre situation is this:

At least the established order has been shaken to the extent of a recognition of new forces bearing in, and a struggle to come. Oftener and oftener the purely commercial producer has to grasp the weapons of art to meet the competition. Outside the old structure, moreover, the independents have built up an organization of their own. Little theatres and art theatres have been established, not on a basis which assures permanence, but with the result that American drama is provided with laboratories for experiment. Playwrights have been encouraged to explore new fields. Decorators have been discovered and trained, and have gone into the regular theatre to leaven the mass there. A few playhouses which are worthy of the theatre as an art have been built. In that there is at least preliminary progress.

On the other hand: The artists have failed to conquer any appreciable proportion of the professional theatres, or to win over any number of the men in power. They have failed to develop a single director or playwright or decorator who can be said to be a great creative figure—an artist of world-measure. The art of acting, in both the professional and the little theatres, continues to suffer alarming relapses. The promised "new art of the theatre" is hardly nearer realization than five years ago. No American Shaw or Barker or Yeats has been born of the struggle against the established order.

The disarrangement of the old order, the starting of forces that *may* revolutionize the theatre of the great public, the development of *promising* artists, a little shifting from the old inartistic basis toward the imaginative and the poetic—that is all. The struggle is only started. It is not a time to begin crowing—only a time for setting the teeth harder, for resolving that the next five years shall be infinitely more fruitful than the last.

But we have faith.

The Quarterly Notebook

The Quarterly NoteBook is a periodical devoted to art and letters. Among its contributors are to be found Messrs Arthur Symons, Sturge Moore, Ezra Pound, William Osler, W. G. Blaikie-Murdoch, Dard Hunter, and E. Basil Lupton. Edited by Alfred Fowler. A few of the papers appearing during 1916 will serve to give some idea of its scope:

Russia the Invincible, by Mr Arthur Symons.
Search in Spain, by Mr Arthur Symons.
Aoi-no-Ue, a Japanese Noh drama by Mr Ezra Pound.
Creators, Transmuters, and Transmitters, by Sir William Osler.
The Art of Arnold Bennett, a critical study by Mr Blaikie-Murdoch.
Dickens as a Student of Scott, one of a series of essays on Dickens by Mr Basil Lupton.
The Art of John Masefield, by Mr Blaikie-Murdoch.

and a number of papers on Watteau, Stevenson, Brontë, and others of similar interest.

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THE QUARTERLY NOTEBOOK

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THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

VOLUME I NUMBER 2
FEBRUARY 1917

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Fragments about Acting

"DURING the last fifty years the art of acting upon the English-speaking stage has steadily declined; judging by the standards which prevailed at the beginning of that period, there is not upon the American stage to-day a single player, male or female, of the first rank, and this result is due chiefly to the establishment of the commercial star and circuit system by speculative managers, possessed of considerable executive ability, but, as a rule, devoid of artistic knowledge, instincts, or ambition. . . ."—JOHN RANKEN TOWSE, in *Sixty Years in the Theatre.*

"THE chief feeling which is at the bottom of our enterprise is indignation against the present state of the theatre. Everywhere you find lack of will, of direction, and of discipline; you find ignorance, laziness, disdain of talent, hatred of beauty, lower and lower plays, and even pleased critics.

"It would be useless to write strong plays to-day. They would find no theatre to receive them, no atmosphere to live in. We will create this atmosphere and attract to us all authors, actors and spectators who want harmony on the stage. . . .

"You know how the stars draw to themselves and away from the play all the interest of the public, and curb the talent of the author to furnish the stars with good opportunities. Against them we shall restore the actor, as a man and as an artist, cultivate him, make him conscious of the morality of his art, defend him against the stiffening of specialization, and take him away from the dissipation of town life."—JACQUES COPEAU, of the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier*, in an interview.

Robert Edmond Jones' model for the opening scene of *The Happy Ending*. An admirable example of suggesting the atmosphere of reality by abstract means. The scene was merely a group of vertical canvas folds, but the palpable darkness of a forest was vividly suggested.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Volume I FEBRUARY, 1917 Number 2

The Art of Robert Edmond Jones

By HIRAM KELLY MODERWELL

BY SOME happy accident, three or four years ago, Robert Edmond Jones went to Europe. I call it an accident, because it must have been, since "Bobbie" Jones is the last person in the world to pursue a chosen scheme of life. And I call the accident happy, because America could never have given him what he found in Florence and Berlin. Perhaps America will some day wring free of the tutelage of Europe, but I hope it will not be until she has learned a great deal more than she knows now. It is fortunate that the group in which Jones found himself after he left college was not composed of those pure patriots who crave an art "one hundred per cent American."

But I don't want to imply that what Jones found in Europe was several trunkfuls of knowledge about the art of the theatre, to be brought back and exhibited in assorted samples for the beautification of the stage. There is no other artist of the theatre working in America to-day whose creative processes are so free from foreign bondage. Berlin taught him quite as much what to avoid as what to do. But merely to have been lazy in a country where beautiful decorations grow on buildings as fungus grows on trees, and to have worked in a country where the theatre is an institution of popular art, is to have drunk several deep draughts from the well of life. Jones got the best out of Germany. He divined the real meaning of that rigmarole of technical education, regimentation and authority, which we in America so fear. He felt the tremendous stimulus of living in the midst of an artistic people. And yet, that he kept his æsthetic head level amid the brilliant, crazy, splendid activity of the German theatre, proved that he was a creator. Jones would have been an artist, and as I believe a great one, if he had never gone east of Provincetown. But without the stimulus of Europe he would never have created up to a third of his capacity.

Maybe I am wrong, but his work in Harvard always seemed to me feeble and sloppy. We loved Bobbie Jones, but we could never find anything to take seriously in his work. There was one portrait which he was required to paint in order to hold his

job as instructor in the Fine Arts Department at so many pins a year. We watched it in progress. It lay around his room for some six months. Every two or three days Bobbie would put a little more paint on it, and with each treatment it seemed to us to grow worse. I doubt if that portrait was ever finished. I seem to have heard a scandal to the effect that the Fine Arts Department willingly dispensed with his services because he failed to submit the "required work."

It was clear enough that Harvard was boring him to death. There were flashes of life, of brilliance, I think, in his conversation. His comments upon what his portrait was meant to be like were fascinating. He had delirious moments over some color scheme that he found in Valeska Suratt's costumes at Keith's Theatre, and I know that he dragged us severally to see Gertrude Hoffman's "Russian" ballet. Denman Ross scared and impressed him a bit with his mathematical color scales and schemes of pure design; and Chandler Post sometimes gave him throbs of appreciation among mysterious masterpieces. But Harvard offered Jones nothing to do; it provided no discipline for learning and no prizes for achieving.

Doubtless Harvard trained his instinct for proportion and design. But Harvard could hardly have given him his *flair* for fabrics and his eye for costumes. These came from Heaven—and Valeska Suratt. In the days I am speaking of we saw some lively costume designs from his brush, and heard much about some "smashing" color schemes for a Broadway chorus. At the suggestion of a shrewd friend or two he prepared some designs for a Harvard Dramatic Club production and got them accepted. And Hasty Pudding made a request *sotto voce* for some ideas, which he provided and which were executed in its spring show. There were also this year one or two posters of striking quality.

And then he left Harvard. Two friends got him a vague job designing costumes for Comstock and Gest in New York. I saw him one day installed in an upper corridor of the Manhattan Opera House, presumably designing a gown for Gertrude Hoffman, but actually working on a "smashing" design for scenery for some hypothetical play, a design not unlike what he later did for the last act of *The Happy Ending*. He had read Gordon Craig by this time. He had seen the Broadway shows from the gallery, and had been fascinated by their amount of coloring, and vexed by their lack of purpose and design. He longed for the simple, the "smashing," the "posterish." But he got no

chance to design the whole color scheme for a musical comedy, as he hoped. A few of his costume designs were taken, were changed and made "practical," and were anonymously used on the stage. Then we heard there had been a blow-up, and Jones left the upper corridor of the Manhattan and retired to private life.

Some months later, in the spring of 1913, he went to Florence with friends. A distinguished foreign visitor, connected with Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater, in Berlin, had previously offered his friendly offices if Jones would come to Berlin to study; so to the Deutsches in the summer he went. He was received graciously, and in consideration of the designs he showed was given privileges behind the scenes and in the Deutsches library, where Stern's and Orlik's designs, and dozens of valuable costume books were stored. But officially he was never more than a welcome hanger-on at the Deutsches.

In Berlin he sat down to watch and study, and to plan "productions." He lived and worked in a little room in Charlottenburg on some unbelievable amount like 200 marks a month, and later paid the penalty for it with a first-rate sickness. He designed a complete "production" for *The Merchant of Venice* and several other plays, and wandered through the department stores fingering fabrics. By the natural process of absorption he learned an astonishing amount about the methods of Reinhardt's staff. To a certain extent he imitated. His *Merchant of Venice* drawings and his setting for *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* certainly reflected the influence of Stern. He showed his designs to Deutsches officials, and received many "ausgezeichnets" and "kollosals" in return. He decorated a window for Wertheim's department store, and all but got the job he was hoping for. In the summer of 1914 he was promised, by the Deutsches directors, the opportunity of doing the scenery and costumes for the Budapesth production of *The Yellow Jacket*. Then the war broke out, and Jones started for America—a refugee.

As I have hinted, what he got from Germany was not any concrete luggage of artistic ideas and methods. If he acquired the technique of Stern and Orlik, or Reinhardt's sense of showmanship, he has mostly shed them by this time. What Berlin really gave him was the sense of something constantly doing. He learned to appreciate the technical education of the German craftsman. He came to know the idiom of the theatre, which is often so different from the idiom of decorative or pictorial art.

He saw the wheels go around in that splendid machine, the German theatre. He felt the keen play of highly specialized minds upon one another, and upon the audience, which, in Germany, is also a specialized mind. He felt a constant pressure of bold tendencies to be adopted, criticized or fought. In short, he woke up.

Let us admit it: the artistic atmosphere of America is sluggish. No more on Broadway than in Harvard, and even less in the little theatres of that day, could he find that impact of forces, artistic or intellectual, which impels men of ability to action. The contented atmosphere of Harvard could only stir him to momentary revolt and then lull him into a restless sleep. In Berlin he found life keyed high, craftsmanship professionally dignified, and artistic creation bold and free.

He came home a trained and matured artist of the theatre. He found things waiting for him. Thanks to the enterprise of Sam Hume and Kenneth Macgowan, there was an exhibition of the "new stagecraft" in a vacant store-room up on Fifth Avenue, and here his designs were shown. Soon he was invited to design the scenery and costumes for Anatole France's *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, which the Stage Society was projecting; and when Granville Barker came from England, at the Society's invitation, and took over the project, Jones passed into the company as a sort of property. To us the first night of this play was breathless. It was the first trial of the "new stagecraft" on Broadway. The Broadway public had its hatchet out for fads, and the newspapers at that time were none too well informed about these new tendencies. But never did a youngster make a more unquestionable success. The beauty of the scene literally took away everyone's breath. The thing—startling and novel as it was—was so utterly right that criticism had no place. It became lodged in the minds of the reviewers that whatever Robert Edmond Jones did was right, and from that day to this I have never seen an unfavorable word about his work in the newspapers, except in two, which have a professional grudge against all that is new.

Soon after this Arthur Hopkins engaged Jones as artist in ordinary for all his productions. Mr. Hopkins was the one professional manager who was not taken by surprise at his success. In *Evangeline* he had already experimented with stage settings suggested by the German methods, and however dull the play may have been, the scenes left a deep impression. Mr. Hopkins is the perfect type of what is called the "practical idealist."

Robert Edmond Jones' model for *Til Eulenspiegel*. The town of of Brunswick as seen by Til's heated imagination.

Setting for *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, as produced by Granville Barker. The coloring was black and gold against a light gray. The beauty of this scene, with its posteresque simplicity and its restful proportions, first established Robert Edmond Jones as a commercial success.

When the history of the American theatre of the present day comes to be written he will, I believe, rank as one of its major forces. At all events, he made Robert Jones a man of the American theatre. By his sympathy and encouragement, as well as by many creative contributions of his own, he effected the establishment of Robert Edmond Jones, the artist, as a regular and indispensable part of American theatrical life. The settings for *The Devil's Garden*, the first made for Mr. Hopkins, were a valuable contribution to the art of realistic setting. The first scene (here reproduced) has become a classic example of the enhancement of realistic theatric effect by artistic means. In *The Happy Ending* the forest of the first act was suggested by many hanging clumps of dark canvas in heavy folds. This was an utterly unrealistic scene, but with its emphasis upon many vertical lines it created the sense of a forest, whose darkness can be felt by the touch. In both these plays there were settings which could add nothing to Mr. Jones' reputation, but this was partly because of timid or inexpert execution. For the first act of *Good Gracious Annabelle* and for both acts of *A Successful Calamity* (plays which are still running) Mr. Jones provided charming scenes, which admirably set the tone of delicate gentility in which the action is played.

In the spring of 1916 Jones received an offer that called forth a very different set of creative processes. This was the invitation to design the inner scenes and the interlude costumes for the New York Shakespearean Tercentenary Masque, "Caliban." In addition to his eight or ten inner scenes he was suddenly called upon, in the illness of the chief costumer, to design some three hundred different costumes for fifteen hundred people, and to supervise their execution. This he was to do within six weeks, and the bulk of it within three. Little needs to be said concerning the splendid effect of the mass coloring in such episodes as the Egyptian, the Roman, and the French. They were a new revelation, to most Americans, of the potency of pure color on a large scale. What interests me most in this achievement is the quantity and rapidity of the work Jones accomplished. With two "slaves" scurrying after period "motifs," and sketching nudes, which Jones literally clothed with his brush, he worked hour after hour at a stretch, creating, scheming, supervising. He created his costumes quite as much in draping fabrics on living models as in painting with colors on paper. He made himself responsible not only for the excellence of his designs, but also for the effectiveness of the finished

product. Once again, he made a complete success; everything else in the gigantic show received its criticism, but Bobbie Jones came off scot free. To my mind the worth of an artist depends quite as much upon the quantity as upon the quality of his output. The poet who turns out one perfect lyric a year cannot claim an important place in the world. The Robert Jones who a few years ago was painfully daubing a portrait for six months, and was uninspired and miserable in doing it, is now an industrious, rapid and accurate worker. His vision is constantly creating, and his hand can keep pace with his vision. When the hand is slow and faltering the vision gets discouraged and subsides. To be an "artist" is not enough; one must also be an artisan. And that Jones is both, I for one give Germany the credit.

It was this same rapidity and resourcefulness that made him able to cope with Nijinsky, when he came to design the scenery and costumes for *Til Eulenspiegel*, which the Russian Ballet staged this season. Nijinsky is a forceful personality; he has a stream of ideas, and they are good ones. Like most geniuses, he longs to take hold of a suggestion and make it his own. So, when *Til* came on the carpet, the struggle started with the first sketches. A less resourceful and creative artist than Jones would perforce have surrendered his personality to Nijinsky's, and beyond a doubt his original designs would have suffered a complete transformation—for the worse. It was really an artistic and personal triumph that Jones, a young American artist without the least prestige in the eyes of the ballet, was able to see his plans through, conceding a point here, withholding it there, delaying the issues at another point, and keeping his own conception intact, in outline and detail, until the triumphal performance came (as usual) and put to sleep all criticism. This was more remarkable, as his designs were a sharp innovation in Ballet Russe scenery. Instead of Roerich's sweeping eastern lines, and Golovine's flat simplicity, Jones filled his canvas with a multitude of Gothic details. The "smashing" costumes were German rather than Russian in their technique. If Jones had "failed" with the public there would have been much spewing and fuming in the Slavic tongue. But he staked his case on the applause of the public—which the Russian Ballet most loves and fears—and won. It could not have been otherwise; the sombre dignity of the cathedral in the background, the grotesque humor of the architectural details, the simple splendor and boisterous fun of the costumes, the marvellously dramatic lighting and

Figures with masks, representing *Lust* and *Silenus*, designed by Robert Edmond Jones for *Caliban*. Such masks, says Mr. Jones, do not cramp the actor, but inspire him.

Setting by Robert Edmond Jones for *The Devil's Garden*, now a classic example of the heightening of dramatic reality by abstract means. In the play the man who is being tried occupies the single chair to the right, while his three judges cluster on the left in cosy familiarity.

color spotting of the close, were too overwhelming in their imaginative appeal to admit of an instant's doubt.

And now there is a foot-note to this that tells you the final convincing word concerning Robert Jones' art. *Til*, besides being a work of art, was a splendid piece of showmanship—one can imagine Reinhardt chuckling over it. But mere showmanship did not conceive it, neither did its success foster in the artist a Barnum soul. As this is being written there is going to the press Robert Edmond Jones' "production" of Shelley's *The Cenci*. The "production" is abstract and ethereal; perhaps it is precious and faddish. But it is anything rather than a good show. As the introduction sets forth, and the drawings illustrate, this "production" uses human beings as its scenery. States of mind in the leading characters are "externalized" in the shape of a silent "chorus," which now menaces, now protects, now exults. All that is particular and local in the play is shorn away. Only the abstract dramatic design, the dominating universal emotions, remain shown forth by "plastic scenery" of the highest known efficiency. One could write pages about this fruitful idea. It is mentioned here only to suggest that Bobbie Jones has not yet sold his soul to any school or any checkbook.

I have said little enough here about the qualities of Jones' work. It is hardly necessary, for the designs stand in abundance on adjacent pages. But merely for keeping the record straight, a few skeleton notations may be here set down. First: I think Jones can be attached to no school, though Stern and Craig, perhaps Appia and certainly Valeska Suratt, can still be seen germinating in his work. There are at least three or four styles which he can manage equally well. His cast of mind might be called a little abstract; he uses motifs not to indicate "period" or even character, but chiefly quality. His coloring, I suppose, contains nothing radically new; it sets forth the old lore of contrasts and harmonies, and is controlled by a keen eye. But he shows his individuality in his love of color as such, his fondness for large, flat, brilliant effects, his positive ruthlessness in his search for the "smashing." His drawing seems to me admirably, marvellously of the stage; it grows out of the dramatic needs of the scene. Of course, in both design and color, Jones simplifies, as any artist must simplify, but I can't find that he has any formula for it.

In the beginning was the artist; then there was Germany; and last there was a lively, but unorganized American theatre. Let us only hope that the last will be worthy of the other two.

A New Medium for Poetic Drama

By Mary Austin

Like those faint trails through the wood to places where wild creatures go to drink, are the paths that lead to the newest fountain-head of Art: first a smooth way into which the foot slips unaware, a barely discernible parting of the grass, and then a broad track that takes on direction and ends suddenly in a huddle of footprints about the spring. And by the time the public has news of the fountain its waters are so roiled and muddied by the multitude that it is impossible for a long time to say whether it is a true perennial fountain or a local puddle.

This has happened recently in America, in the attempt to free poetry from traditional forms. There are those who suppose the movement merely the seasonal overflow of minor poets from the neighborhood of Washington Square; but those of us who were privileged to come stealing upon it through the wilderness of American literary invention of the first decade of this century, believe it to be sprung from that true fountain of youth which somebody or other always hoped to find in America.

It is such a far cry from a Paiute village, called "The-Mush-That-Was-Afraid," to the Sunday-At-Home of a distinguished London critic, that it is impossible for me to say just when I discovered that the half-clew I followed was a trail to Somewhere; but I can recall very well the occasion of my first speaking of it. This was in the winter of 1903-4, in an address before the English Club of Stanford University. What I had discovered past any doubt was that the poetic forms of the Amerind (to use the term sanctioned by professional scholarship) reflect to an extraordinary degree the land he lives in: its reach of view; its contours, sharp or flowing; its fatness; its forest cover. After a reasonable study of the various forms of Amerind verse, it is possible, on hearing a new one, to say very exactly whether it comes from mountain or desert region, Platte River, Great Lakes, or Western Mesa. If one takes musical notation into account, and tonal quality, it is possible to name the very tribe; but I am speaking now only of measure and rhythm. People who have despaired of America producing a distinct art of her own may take heart at this. The universal reflection of what a man lives and sees, in what he produces, does not fail here, and river and prairie will work out their own expression quite as surely through

the stubborn European stuff we send them, as it has already been worked in the native Amerind. It is not only possible, but it is inevitable that, for any sure forecast of the future forms of literary art in America, we must look in our native and aboriginal narrative and verse and drama.

Drama played an important part in the daily life of the Amerind, but it can hardly be said to have attained a convention of form; or rather, it was in the form of the earliest Greek drama known to us, the Satyric dances. Some of the great tribal dramas required several days for complete production, and weeks of preparation. Always there was a story, sometimes comic, often historical, but the best was, as with the Greeks, always occupied for its theme with the relation of Man to the Great Mystery.

It is this religious significance of aboriginal drama which makes the study of its literary medium important to the modern dramatist. Bear in mind that the slightest mistake in its performance might have the most serious consequences to the tribe, and that there was no means of preserving it except by word of mouth from generation to generation; then you can easily see that it was necessary for tribal welfare that the *medium* of the drama should be as perfect as was humanly possible. It must be easily remembered, easily apprehended, and have every aid that could be afforded by rhythm, sound sequence and all those complicated processes which go to make up what we call literature.

Where words are so precious that they must needs be preserved a thousand years or so, then something must go along with the words, like amber, to keep their vital form intact long after they would have in the ordinary use become, as many of Shakespeare's words are, obsolete. Indian drama, which consists of song sequences, dance interludes and recitative, was obliged to have such a medium in order to save itself alive.

Here the lack of space makes it necessary to skip the fascinating process of discovering and transcribing into English the lasting fiber of that medium. One must be taken largely on trust in saying that the medium of Amerind drama is like that of all great drama, poetic; and that its rhythms are based on the bodily movements which naturally take their rise in the emotions evoked. It lacks the item of rhyme, and though it exhibits a tendency to flow into form, the form is never controlled by convention, but by the natural accompanying movement. Such a thing as a native drama done all in one kind of verse would be impossible. The verse-rhythm flows along with the action like a

river in its bed. Perhaps it is enough to say that I can find you quite as perfect examples of this rhythm in the works of Edgar Lee Masters and Amy Lowell as in the reports of the Bureau of Ethnology. As a matter of fact *all* important tribal affairs are carried on in cadenced speech, nicely suited to the matter in hand, and when I wrote my first Indian play, *The Arrow Maker*, I wrote it instinctively in this medium.

In my innocence I had already tried some examples of this sort of versification on the highest-browed magazine in America, and had had it returned with a top-loftical editorial comment that they "couldn't see any excuse for its being written." Fortunately the more popular magazines proved kinder, and in old files of *McClure's* and *Everybody's* you will find what is probably the first "free verse" published in any American magazine. But when I offered *The Arrow Maker*, written in that form, a horrified agent refused to accept it and said plainly that no New York manager would so much as look at it. So I rewrote my manuscript in ordinary prose form, and later, when it was being produced at the New Theatre, I used to see both producers and actors puzzling over lines which they could not make up their minds to deliver as poetry or prose. I fancy no one would have that difficulty now, though the lines are still printed in prose form.

Up to this time it had not occurred to me to use the Indian medium for anything but Indian plays, but in the summer of 1909 I was in England, and at the house of Edmund Gosse took part in a conversation on the dearth of modern poetic drama. It was William Archer, I think, who declared that the issue of poetic drama depended on the discovery of a new verse-form capable of carrying modern emotion. Elizabethan forms had been so stamped by Shakespeare as to render them forever sacred to his genius, even if the thoughts of men had continued to keep step with their sonority. Celtic verse, such as had been used so delightfully by Mr. Yeats, was too monotonous, and also too remote for general use; the same ban lay on Maeterlinck's measured phrases. And then Mr. Gosse, with the polite intention of including me in the conversation, suggested that it was up to America to produce the much-needed medium—(no, of course Edmund Gosse didn't say "up to," but that was what he meant). I am sure they hadn't any of them expected anything to come out of the West so apt as that, but they were all interest and appreciation when I began to tell and to give examples of native American Indian drama in its chosen medium. I remem-

ber quoting the Pawnee Travel Song, with its long undulating lines like the prairie of the Platte, with the little jog of the pony trot coming in oddly at the end, and also a Paiute Lament that begins so:—

> My son! my son!
> I will go up the mountain.
> There I will light a fire to my son's spirit,
> And there I will lament him,
> Saying,
> O my son, what is my life to me, now you are departed!

It was the encouragement that I received that afternoon which led to my writing *Fire*, a drama in three acts, which was tried out at the Forest Theatre in 1912 and produced with much success at the San Francisco Exposition in the summer of 1915. So far as I can learn, this was the first "free verse" drama produced on any American stage. Even so, I found the actors constantly altering the measure, dropping words or filling in, pulling back toward the old, familiar forms. When, in 1914, the Wisconsin Play Book offered to publish *Fire*, further damage was done the original form by the friend who prepared the manuscript for me, I being ill at the time. He worked his hardest to make conventional verse out of it, and offered me in conclusion this valuable hint: "You write splendid plays," he said, "but you really shouldn't try to write poetry. I had a dreadful time trying to straighten out some of those lines."

By this time, of course, the woods were full of writers who had discovered the trails to this new Spring of native verse, and in 1916 the Washington Square Players gave it the "coup" of professional approval by producing Zoë Akins' *Magical City*, a modern drama in the freest of free verse.

It is true that the variety of free verse which is produced in the vicinity of Washington Square lacks the music and tenderness of the forms I am most acquainted with among Indians of the Southwest; but who knows, perhaps the early tribe of Manhattan had a truculent temperament.

I have spoken chiefly of the "verse-form" of the Amerind, though I am sensible that some other descriptive word ought to be invented to express the adjustment of form to character and emotion which characterizes aboriginal drama. No such thing occurs there as the king answering the fool in the same measures, or Portia and Falstaff employing a similar cadence for their several emotions. Every man's speech proceeds from the centre of consciousness of that man, and the fluency of the form

can be seen in any ordinary Indian pow-pow when, as emotions are excited and gradually lifted to the same plane by a community of interest, the cadence of the speeches keeps pace with it, so that at the high moments everyone speaks more or less in the same key. When dramatic interest drops, the manner of speech tends to greater diversity.

There are many striking likenesses between original Amerind and modern magazine narrative forms, and it may be possible that the recent tendency toward community masque and the dramatization of man's relation to his job, in pageant and play, may be quite in line with this influence of the soil. Out in the West, where the climate permits it, Raisin Festivals, Tournaments of Roses, Grape Harvests, and Cherry-blossom Fêtes, seem to fall naturally into the aboriginal Festival of Green Corn, Piñon Harvest Dance, and Mountain Festivals. These are items which stare every student of local art influences in the face. Yet, no longer ago than two years, I wrote an article for one of our best-known magazines on *Art Influences in the West* from which the editor forced me to delete what I have said here about the relation between modern American drama and native American drama, and permitted the mention of the festivals only in connection with early Greek celebrations. This sort of shallow snobbishness is quite as much to blame for retarding indigenous development as is our much-decried commercialism. Free verse has, I believe, like the wolf in the ancient nursery tale, got one paw in the crack of the stage door. The next moment it will come shouldering through.

Plays for Little Theatres

WE HAVE received so many requests for information about plays suitable for experimental and other little theatres that we are unable to answer each individually. We therefore plan to publish in the May issue an article describing the plays which have proved most successful on little theatre stages, stating whether the texts are in print, and from whom acting rights can be obtained. We hope to make the list accurate and authoritative, and we shall welcome from producing organizations descriptive lists of their most successful productions.

We regret the mistake made in the November issue, in which we attributed the authorship of *Brown* to Ben Hecht. The play was written by Maxwell Bodenheim, and was produced by the Players' Workshop in Chicago.

New York's Best Season

HARDLY more than three years ago I made the statement that New York was the one place to avoid in looking for the real progress of the American theatre; that one would do better to go to such out-of-the-way communities as Madison, Lake Forest, Carmel and Cambridge. I had been seeking signs of an art theatre movement, similar to that so apparent in Europe. Boston had its Toy Theatre, Chicago its Little Theatre, and many a small town its progressive group; but New York was practically barren of significant experimental effort.

During holiday week of the present season I returned to New York after a three years' absence. I had read of the Washington Square Players and the Neighborhood Playhouse, and I was thus prepared to find a notable advance over the stagnant conditions of a few years ago. But it was a surprise to find that New York had taken rank as the one big American centre of experimental activity, both in the production of the newer forms of drama and in the new stagecraft.

Consider the situation as revealed in that week. In the purely professional theatres there were four productions that bore the characteristic poetic or intellectual "art theatre" stamp. Three other uptown theatres were given over to organizations which had tried out their productions, and made their names, in the semi-professional or amateur fields. Four organizations that are frankly dedicated to producing the unusual or the untried, were offering widely varied productions in their own scattered playhouses. And certain homeless experimental organizations were presenting productions in the regular theatres at odd matinées. Certainly such a record marks this as the season of seasons in New York, if one judges by the presentation of plays that belong to the art of the theatre and not merely to the amusement business.

Looking first at the offerings of the commercial managers—at those productions which, as some of my Broadway friends would say, are not tainted with amateurism—one could choose for intellectual exercise to see the talkiest of all Shaw plays, *Getting Married*, or one of the most absorbingly didactic plays of recent years, Hermann Bahr's *The Master*. Shaw is typically an author of the new movement, and *Getting Married* has hitherto been considered so far removed from the emotional-dramatic formula that even the radical groups have hesitated to attempt it on the

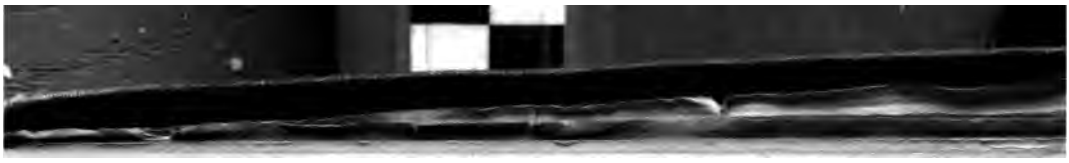
stage. And yet one finds it filling one of the larger New York theatres for a run that is measured by months. There were times when one realized the absence of an emotional story, gaps when the talkiness became oppressively evident; but for two-thirds of the way the dialogue was so witty, and the points of view so fresh and startling, that one could gladly forgive the occasional lapses.

Arnold Daly's fine production of *The Master* offered an interesting contrast to *Getting Married.* It too is clearly of the drama of thought, rather than the drama of emotion, but depends far less upon humor for its effectiveness. What kept the audience intent was the continual play of idea against idea, the revelation of new viewpoints, of new slants upon life. Such entertainment is not for the lazy-minded (sometimes abbreviated "T. B. M."); for cultured audiences it is a mental treat.

At the other extreme of unusual dramatic fare, one might choose between *The Yellow Jacket* and *Pierrot the Prodigal.* As to the colorful and poetic Chinese play one can only repeat that it is alike a delight to the eye and a spiritual experience. The Coburn production seemed quite as good as, if not better than, the original presentation, both in acting and in stage management. *Pierrot the Prodigal* belongs to the progressive group by virtue of being a revival in an almost forgotten form, and by virtue of its fine artistry. One expects Winthrop Ames to do things well. But it is seldom that even he puts on a production of such unusual interest to the theatre technician, and at the same time so entertaining for the general public.

The second group, the Broadway productions that had "moved in" from neighborhood or experimental playhouses, was made up of offerings by the Gertrude Kingston Company, the Portmanteau Players, and the Washington Square Players. Whatever may be Miss Kingston's professional standing, this bill, compounded of Shaw and Dunsany, stamps her as of the revolutionists. The farcical *Great Catherine*, which proved to be one of the most hilarious entertainments of the season, and Dunsany's tragic *The Queen's Enemies*, with its poetry and its tense moment, made a combination notable for the progressive and the conservative alike.

Few will quarrel with the placing of the Washington Square Players in the semi-professional group. They have been subject to hostile criticism because they challenged comparison with the commercial theatres, without displaying the true professional "finish." It is better to accept them frankly as rather young



graduates from the purely experimental school, still feeling their way a little uncertainly in acting and in stagecraft. The holiday bill, with two notable serious plays, *Bushido* and *Trifles*, provided far better entertainment than the usual offerings on Broadway. Whether their productions are worth the two-dollar scale of prices is another question. At least they are on Broadway with something original, and that is a sign of progress.

In the same way it is difficult to judge the Portmanteau Players. They brought to New York a repertory of plays, poetical and fantastic, of a sort that otherwise would not reach the boards, and for that alone one must give them credit and thanks. The combination of fresh material with simplified setings, offered novel enjoyment for New York audiences. But the Portmanteau Players should remember that to compete with the commercial theatres on their own ground, they must get all there is out of that material; and they must carry the new stagecraft not merely to the point of simplification, but to its most compelling forms of beauty and appropriateness. They achieved the full dramatic tension of the Dunsany plays, but failed to bring out the full flavor of the poetry; and the settings fell far short of the ideal.

It is significant that on Broadway there were these seven productions which are miles removed from the accepted Broadway formulas. But it is even more important that New York has playhouses entirely dedicated to experimental work,—theatres which find no method of playwriting or play producing too unfamiliar or too radical to merit trial. The Provincetown Players come as near to being a "free theatre" group as any organization in America. They have made over their playhouse from an old restaurant on Macdougal Street, and they work on a stage of the most primitive sort. The results, as I saw them, were undeniably crude; but I believe that there is value in the effort so long as the organization clings to its idea of putting its members' plays on the stage for the sake of experience.

The Neighborhood Playhouse stands on a broader basis, with a social, as well as an artistic ideal, and it is the best example of its type in America. Utilizing neighborhood talent, changing its bills often, and experimenting in every form of drama and dance, it necessarily mixes some poor performances with good ones. But many times theatregoers have discovered that they could get more real artistic value for their quarter-dollar there than for two dollars in the theatres farther uptown.

The Bramhall Playhouse is of a different complexion. It is

dedicated to the production of one man's plays, and to an ideal which many of us increasingly dislike—realism. But when a man clings to his ideal as consistently as Butler Davenport does, and learns as he goes, one must have admiration. He has decorated his little auditorium with such reticence and taste that it is a delightful contrast to the usual theatre; and his family-like professional company suggests new possibilities in theatre organization. His only fault is—realism.

The single dramatic performance of the Nine O'Clock Theatre hardly entitles it to place in the list of active experimental playhouses. But Miss Freeman's achievement in creating a playhouse with an atmosphere consistently artistic through all its parts, is worthy of comment—and inspires hope.

The Stage Society and the newly organized Morningside Players, homeless groups, are likewise working experimentally.

To return to the commercial theatres, one more production demands attention, although the play was not of an unusual type. *Good Gracious Annabelle* was marked by such remarkable stage management that the production stood out as an advance over anything of the sort seen in recent years. Indeed, the craftsmanship was such that it marks Arthur Hopkins as the real genius among the stage managers of the American theatre. In passing, one might mention, too, that Sarah Bernhardt was appearing on Broadway that week, in one-act plays; and that she was soon to give way to Maude Adams in Barrie's *A Kiss For Cinderella*, one of his sweetest and most charming, if one of his slightest and most ephemeral, fantasies.

By way of tag-ends, I am reminded, too, that the most important and most successful of all attempts to found a children's theatre was being made with matinée performances at a Forty-second Street playhouse; and that Pavlowa was prostituting her art in the two-a-day Hippodrome shows; and that Joseph Urban and R. E. Jones seemed to be fast convincing the managers that the newer forms of stage decoration are the best.

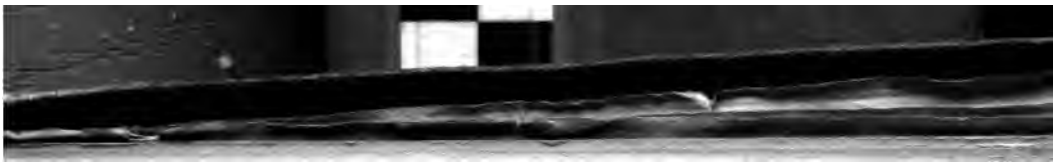
Finally, I submit that when in one week seven typical art theatre productions occupy as many theatres within four short blocks of that dramatic centre of the universe, known as Forty-second and Broadway; and when there are four other out-and-out anti-commercial, experimental playhouses between Washington Square and Central Park; and when half a dozen other eruptions of the new art spirit can be detected in scattered theatres; then New York has become the livest dramatic studio in God's slowly bettering world. S. C.

Sketch for the first-act setting of *Good Gracious Annabelle*. This scene, which was executed without a particle of paint, was intended to suggest the lobby of a "select" New York hotel, and to set the tone for the quiet action and dialogue of Clare Kummer's play. With this play Arthur Hopkins, aided by Mr. Jones, set a new mark in the production of comedy in America.

Design by Robert Edmond Jones for one of the "inner scenes" of *Caliban*, representing the last scene of *The Merchant of Venice*. The stage equipment for this and seven other scenes consisted of a broad raised platform, two small movable platforms, and some hanging canvas in four sections. By altering the position of these simple elements, by posing his characters in a decorative manner, and by changing lights, he produced an astonishing variety and distinctiveness in the scenes.

Design by Robert Edmond Jones for the platform scenes from *Hamlet*, as seen in *Caliban*. This was produced with exactly the same materials as those used in the *Merchant of Venice* scene on the opposite page.

Sketch in clay by Robert Edmond Jones for the opening scene of *The Cenci*. In Mr. Jones' "production" of Shelley's *The Cenci*, which shortly is to be issued in limited edition with introduction and designs by Mr. Jones, the only scenery (outside of a neutral back curtain) consists of human beings. This silent chorus, who can be regarded as "servants of Cenci" or what you will, interprets in pose and gesture the dominating motives of the play. The whole scheme would appear to be extremely fruitful, and is not nearly so outlandish as it sounds in brief résumé. — H. K. M.



The Dance as an Art Form

By Ruth St. Denis

A critic (?) on reviewing one of my performances made the following statement: "Dancing is an art that is executed with the feet." This is an opinion which has been held by a vast number of people until very recently. And this was justified because of the total dance output being of the "one-two-three-kick" variety. But the advent of Isadora Duncan brought about the renaissance of the dance as movement, and my own creations the dance as an art unity.

Dancing for pleasure, dancing for physical exercise, ballet dancing and folk dancing, deal only with movement arranged to music. But as soon as the dance is taken into the realm of art a whole cycle of co-related arts must be considered and dealt with. When the varied arts work together, the giving and taking of inspiration is a mutual thing. Two arts which have received a remarkable impulse in this country recently from the inspiration of dancing and dancers, are those of sculpture and photography.

Eleven years ago this spring I made my first appearance in my East Indian dances. Up to that time there had been nothing in the way of dances presented as an art unity emanating from one creative mind. And the dance as an art form is still in its infancy. There are very few people who understand the principles of presenting a dance unity, and many of the younger generation of dancers, who appear to do so, are merely clever imitators, copying the externals of things which they have seen.

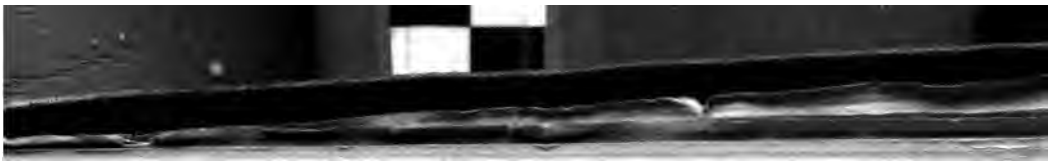
Tolstoi has said "Art is a manifestation of feeling," and Delsarte that "Motion is the language of the emotions." The creative dancer begins with a feeling which she wishes to express. This feeling sometimes remains chaotic for a long time. In my own case, after I had played dramatic parts in Belasco's companies for five years, my restless yearning, my unformed feelings, finally crystallized very suddenly upon seeing a cigarette poster depicting a statue of Isis. As I looked at this calm, impersonal deity and compared this emanation with the tempestuous courtesans of Mrs. Leslie Carter's Du Barry and Zaza, I said to myself, "this is what I want to express." By "this" I meant that I wanted to express principles of life, and present a constructive art rather than the type of thing which the emotional

actress gives forth in the Sapphos and Camilles. The idea, that is the intellectual form of my dance, took two years to come to completion even after that. The story, as it was told finally, was that of the Buddhistic teaching of renunciation, and was told by my taking the character of "Rahda," the deified wife of "Krishna," and dancing the five senses and renunciation, and the final attainment of spiritual consciousness.

To present this idea through an art form necessitated the use of music, costumes, properties, scenery, people, and lighting effects, in addition to the actual movements by which I told the story. All these things had to be so chosen, and so blended, as to become each an integral part of a unity. This cannot be successfully done except by one directing, creative genius. The story, which first existed only in my own mind, was finally brought to completion, and when it reached that point, music, costumes, properties, Hindu assistants, all told the same story. The costume was not designed merely to tickle the eye; the changes of lighting were not made merely for their theatrical effectiveness; the music existed not alone because it pleased the ear; but it was because all these things, including the movement of my body, were the vocabulary with which I was forming the sentences of my story.

The scene in which an art dance is presented should be like a painting, and the relation of the principals or people in that scene to the scene itself should always be such that, at every movement during the entire action, the composition is perfect. The dancers should so move that, if the movement were arrested at any point, the body lines would present a sculptural perfection. The music, while designed primarily as an accompaniment to the dancers, and an attribute of the scene, should be such that a symphony conductor in the audience, closing his eyes, would be satisfied. The costumes must be both beautiful and appropriate, in action and in repose.

This is the ideal! Color, tone and movement all in one perfect unity. And when we fail, we fail largely because of poverty, for the art dance is the most expensive medium of expression in the world. For a dance, which, at its longest, should occupy no more than twelve or fifteen minutes, often requires a setting calling for an outlay of time and thought and money equal to productions for the Metropolitan Opera; and the dancer has not the bank account of the Metropolitan Opera behind him. The directors of the Metropolitan Opera, I am told on good authority, expect to lose at least $100,000 on the Diaghileff



Ballet Russe. But this is a foreign art, and must, therefore, be very good for us, and so the money is philanthropically spent. The productions of this ballet, however, in many cases, have failed artistically because of the mixed thought in their creation. The music has been composed by one man, the scene designed by another, the costumes by yet another; and a ballet director has composed the dances, which finally are interpreted to us by the *premières* and their supporting company. The inharmony of these creations is sometimes painfully apparent.

In the arts of painting, sculpture, music composition, literature, the result given to the public is the work of one creator, driven by one inspiration. The product of the theatre is often likely to be the result of imperfect harmony of many working together. The dance as an art form will succeed best always when there is one creating and directing mind, and all other people are merely the instruments or material which this head uses for working out a unity. There have been up to the present time no schools of the dance which have gone into the dance as an art. The pupil must acquire his technical training and motion, and then, if he desires to present this theatrically as an art production, he is left to sail uncharted seas.

When Mr. Shawn and I founded "Denishawn," our school in California, we designed it to meet the need of those students who wish to master the dance as an art, and not merely to learn steps to music. There the pupil studies dancing and its related arts, and is helped to formulate his own individual unique product, without the waste of time and energy, and the agony, which I myself had to go through to collect material from widely scattered sources.

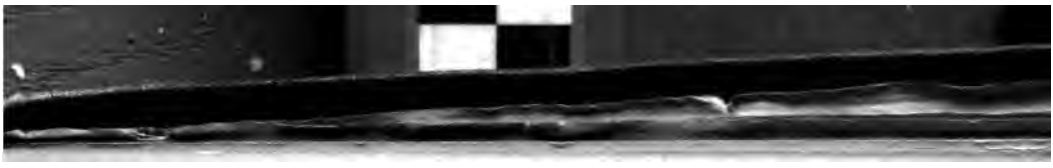
Pageantry, which is rightfully growing in favor with the American people, will reach its highest point by the incorporating of the dance as an art form, because motion is the language of distance, and the dance of to-day is the most efficient and expressive motion. Though I have pioneered in placing before the public mind the dance as an art form, as a something higher and different from the stereotyped ballet, I do not feel that I have by any means accomplished all. I have merely blazed a new trail and hope the coming generations will travel along it to arrive at a promised land, the beauty of which I have seen only in visions.

The Nine O'Clock Theatre

Few American playhouses, small or large, are better known to the public, by name, than Helen Freeman's Nine O'Clock Theatre; and yet there are few about which the average theatregoer, or even the average dramatic critic, could give less real information. For three months last fall the New York newspapers published periodic announcements that the Nine O'Clock Theatre would open on such-and-such an evening, only to follow each time with the statement that failure to comply with some newly discovered law or regulation had forced a postponement. The dramatic journals contained occasional notices that the playhouse had opened, and more than one out-of-town newspaper, making up news from advance notices, told of successful first nights. The playhouse was thus advertised as few ever have been. But, as usual, the journalistic emphasis was all on the police phase of the matter, and nothing was said of the artistic aspect. Perhaps there is reason, for there was a whole three-months season of official wrangling, and only one solitary dramatic performance on the stage, and that purely invitational.

It is from the standpoint of art, however, that the playhouse stands out as unique among the theatres of America. In the first place, and considering only the physical side, Miss Freeman has created the most attractive and most atmospheric of all the intimate playhouses of this country. Within a few weeks I have visited nearly a score of "miniature," "toy," "thimble," "workshop," and merely "little" theatres in the Eastern and Middle Western states. At the end of the trip I find that the Nine O'Clock playhouse leaves in my mind the most distinctive impression of them all. Despite the fact that only one dramatic production was ever staged there, the average little playhouse group can probably learn more from the Nine O'Clock Theatre than from any other.

The distinctive achievement of the theatre is its consistent artistry. Miss Freeman planned the creation of a studio theatre, where the actor and producer could present "plays gay, fanciful, serious or sophisticated," and where the audience could go at nine o'clock for "a couple of hours of amusement, a bit of dreaming, a thrill or two." She wisely avoided the workshop atmosphere — there is always something disillusioning in even the best of the so-called workshop theatres; her ideal was rather



a place for the making and showing of beautiful things — erring, if it must err, in the direction of the fastidious rather than the crude.

The first impression gained from the theatre is that the auditorium and stage are of one piece (almost literally, since both are hung with draperies of slightly differing tones of the same color). Each belongs to the other, one and inseparable, bringing a sense of unity, restfulness and quiet dignity. The auditorium, to quote Miss Freeman, is "a fascinating, misty-hued little place, done in tints of blue." The walls, except where the necessary doorways intervene, are entirely covered with hangings, which are without design, but which fall in decorative folds, and carry sufficient interest in the delicate coloring. The chairs, of which there are sixty or seventy, are of very simple design, but deep and comfortable.

The feeling of intimacy is increased by two broad steps, which lead from auditorium to stage. The space back of the curtain is unexpectedly large, as one goes to it from the "front"; for Miss Freeman is primarily the practical worker of the theatre, and designed the stage first, and not as an afterthought. The electrical equipment, too, is of professional calibre.

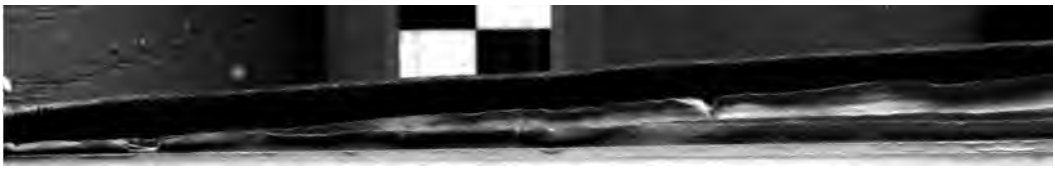
But it is the settings that are of most interest to the worker and student in theatre art. I did not see the one dramatic production, when Miss Freeman's company (of professionals) produced Paula Jacobi's *Chinese Lily* and Oliphant Downs' *The Maker of Dreams*, with an interlude of songs by Madame Nina Varesa. But when I stepped into the tiny playhouse for the first time one of the settings was still in place. The background was entirely of draperies, still in the delicate shades of blue. But at one side — in just the right spot, it seemed — a narrow Chinese hanging provided a brilliant streak of orange. This note was repeated in one or two pieces of the simple furniture used in the production. The whole formed a background highly effective in itself, dignified, unobtrusive, and decorative; and yet it was nothing more than a background, properly throwing the emphasis on the players and action. (Other little theatres take note!). When I went later to see Lillian Emerson dance on the same stage, the brighter color had gone from the background, and the gray-blue hangings formed a perfectly neutral setting — as was necessary where dances of differing moods must be given without changes of set.

If it was necessary to have further proof that the unity, the tone, of the Nine O'Clock Theatre was studied, and not a happy

accident, one found it in the physical aspect of the programs. Unlike the almost universal abominations called "programs," these revealed no attempt at display. They were simple printed slips, set in a type-face of unmistakable distinction, and impressed on Japanese vellum. It is a small matter, this one of program printing, but some of us have thought much about it of late, when at theatres pretending to art standards we have been handed the horrors with the "commercial art" covers and the commercial printer's cheapest attempts at "style" inside.

To sum up the lessons which the average little theatre can learn from Miss Freeman's venture, there is first *thoroughness*, a consistent, pervading sense of intelligent attention to every detail before and behind the curtain; second, *artistic taste*, a knowledge of just what touch is necessary to make a setting decorative, and a feeling for the finer harmonies in the auditorium and on the stage; and third, *personality*—of which I have written least. But after all, it is perhaps most important. The Nine O'Clock Theatre is above all others I know, the expression of a single individuality. It is dainty, exquisite, lovely in a feminine way—certainly no man would build such a theatre—and it embodies one woman's dream of an artistic ideal. If half a dozen theatre artists were to build in this country as many such theatres, consistently original and consistently expressive of themselves, we should have such a wealth and such a variety of laboratory or studio stages as would provide every playwright with congenial and adequate testing-place.

It is Helen Freeman's achievement that she has built perfectly of a type. In the ultimate analysis it will count little that she built in a place where exclusive rich neighbors and unsympathetic city officials consider any sort of theatre an intrusion and a fracture of the law's dignity. Fortunately she is able to build again in more congenial surroundings. And when, next season, in the new location, she does hold the much-advertised public opening, there will be many to wish her Godspeed. In the meantime, we who are interested in the new art of the theatre can only bid her keep up courage in the faith that she is doing something well worth while. S. C.



An Experiment in Simplicity

By W. L. Sowers

In the season of 1915-1916 the Curtain Club of the University of Texas made an experiment in simplicity that should be of interest to followers of the new stagecraft. Although the Club had made its reputation by a long series of revivals of English and Continental classics, it decided to give in addition a program of short plays illustrative of significant modern dramatic work. The production, however, offered many difficulties. The only building that could be secured was a large auditorium seating fifteen hundred people. The stage was thirty-two feet wide, and jutted ten feet before the curtain in the form of a curved apron. Its equipment consisted of a few pulleys and the simplest lighting system. Moreover, no appropriate costumes and scenery were available, and as the performance was to be semi-private, the strictest economy must be observed. How, under the circumstances, could an artistic production be made? That was the problem.

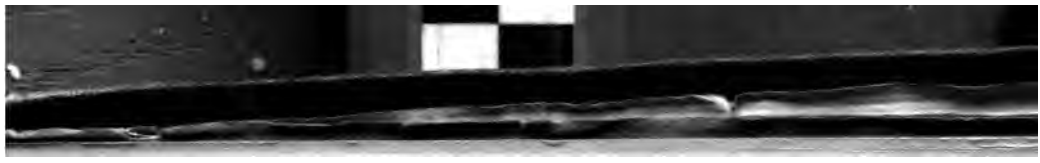
The plays finally selected for the experiment were *Rosalind*, by Sir James Barrie; *The Workhouse Ward*, by Lady Gregory; *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, by Bernard Shaw; and *The Glittering Gate*, by Lord Dunsany. They represented not only four important modern writers for the theatre, but also four distinct phases of modern dramatic work. Ranging as they did from a comedy and a farce of modern life to a costume-play and an imaginative serious piece, they offered considerable variety. Although the settings must suggest such different places as the interiors of an English seaside cottage and of an Irish workhouse, the garden of the Tower in the time of Elizabeth, and the ledge before the gate of Heaven, they all seemed capable of simplification. Moreover, only the costumes for the four characters of *The Dark Lady* would cause any trouble or expense. Even after the plays were selected, however, there was some difficulty in determining the order, but consideration of appropriateness and convenience decided that *The Glittering Gate* should come first, and that *The Workhouse Ward*, *Rosalind*, and finally *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* should follow.

But how could the four plays be mounted most inexpensively? Even with the width and depth of the stage reduced in order to throw the action well forward, there was a very considerable

expanse to be filled by settings of some kind. Drops or built-up scenery were too costly and too difficult to handle. The solution of the problem seemed to be hangings. Therefore, two sets of curtains, one gray and the other black, were planned to do duty for all four plays. Each set consisted of three curtains: one large curtain thirty-six feet wide for the back of the stage, and two curtains eighteen feet wide for the sides. All were made twenty-one feet long so that no borders would have to be used across the top of the stage. As they were made of outing flannel, bought at wholesale for a few cents a yard, they did not cost a great deal. They were not hung upon wires or rods, but were tacked in slight folds upon long two-by-fours and suspended from pulleys. They proved so easy to handle that they corrected one of the most common and most trying faults of amateur productions—long waits. The complete changes of settings between plays were made in three, four, and five minutes by the stop-watch, and all four plays were given between 8:20 and 10:25.

When the curtain rose upon *The Glittering Gate* one bulb in the middle of the footlights threw a pale bluish light upon the setting. Close inside the stage curtain the large black hanging had been stretched entirely across the stage. The dark curtain extending far up into the shadows and the indistinct apron of the stage suggested very well the wall of Heaven with the ledge at its foot. In the middle of the stage stood a massive square-topped portal, made of inexpensive lumber, painted black, to make it blend with the hanging; within its depths were two tall narrow gates of dull gold. At the left a small box, covered with black cloth and a heap of beer bottles, were half concealed by the shadows. That was all—the lofty black wall, the dark portal, the dull gold gates with the grotesque shadow of the burglar as he worked. Finally, when the entrance had been forced, and Bill and Jim pulled out the heavy gates, the void hung with stars was suggested by the black side curtains, hung up-stage and sprinkled with a few dull gold formal stars. Although no more simple setting could have been devised, it was made very effective by the use of shadows and darkness.

The change to *The Workhouse Ward* took less than four minutes. The portal was pushed off, the black curtain was lowered and hung farther up-stage, ready for future use; the gray curtain, already in position, was let down, and the gray side curtains were pulled into place. Two battered iron beds and two chairs were placed upon the stage, a cold bright light was turned on—and the stage represented the interior of Cloon Workhouse



with the old paupers at their humorous exchanges. This was the barest and simplest of all the settings, but it furnished an adequate and appropriate background for the piece, and threw the acting into high relief. Since the setting was not more than twelve feet deep, the action was brought far forward. As in the other plays, all entrances and exits were made down front, where the sides of the settings were screened by the overlapping stage curtain.

The change from *The Workhouse Ward* to *Rosalind* was equally simple. The same gray curtains, shown under soft, warmer light, formed the room in Dame Quickly's English cottage. At the middle front of the stage andirons suggested a fireplace, around which were grouped the few necessary pieces of furniture. In the centre a tea-table was spread, at the right stood a large sofa, covered with brilliant chintz with a large rose pattern, and at the left were a big chair in similar chintz and an English Windsor chair. At the back of the stage were curtains for two large windows, of the same gay chintz. A large plain rug covered the floor. While the setting was not at all a reproduction of an English room of the type, it had sufficient detail to be interesting and suggestive, and sufficient simplicity to be an appropriate and decorative background for the play.

Although the decoration of the next play, Shaw's *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, was the most elaborate of the production, it was set in five minutes. Its terrace had been standing ready all evening behind the shallow settings of the other plays, and its large black curtain had been in place since the end of the first play. At the conclusion of *Rosalind* the gray curtains were quickly removed, the black side curtains were strung up, the floor covering was stretched, and the steps and trees of the terrace put into place. In a very short time the interior of a modern cottage was replaced by the garden of the Tower in Elizabeth's day.

This setting was undoubtedly the achievement of the evening. The tall black curtains, which completely enclosed the fairly large stage, were lovely in the soft light, and suggested excellently the rich darkness of the night. Across the back of the stage ran a white terrace, and along its entire front stretched three white steps. At the top of the steps four low evergreen trees, placed in dull gold pots and covered with dull gold formal flowers, were set at regular intervals along the terrace. And before the steps stretched the great black-and-white marble flagstones of the front stage. But this setting, beautiful as it was in its simplicity, was only the background for the figures of the

drama. Back and forth, in the moonlight, paced the warder in black and gold, with a dull gold helmet and spear. From the shadow came Shakespeare with a black cloak covering his costume of vivid green. Across the white terrace and down the steps came Queen Elizabeth in the sleep-walking scene. As she awoke her black coat fell off, and her vivid cerise gown leapt into flame beside Shakespeare's green and against the white and black of the background. And across the terrace came the Dark Lady in rich purple. Against the background the costumes stood out as lively splashes of color, and the whole scene had a beauty that surprised even those that planned it.

The Curtain Club's experiment showed that hangings offer an inexpensive, convenient, and effective means of setting plays. With a few significant properties and pieces of furniture they not only provide an adequate and suggestive setting, but at the same time a pleasing decoration. They have a satisfying completeness generally lacking in realistic settings. Best of all, their simplicity throws into prominence the acting and the play itself.

The New Interior

In a book by Hazel H. Adler, entitled *The New Interior*, and published by the Century Company, we have found certain statements about the new ideals of house decoration which seem to summarize the spirit of the new stage decoration as well. We particularly recommend the last two sentences to the attention of those producers who still cling to the naturalistic method of staging:—

During the evolution of certain *forms* and *details* of decoration, the sense of general proportion disappeared, and the essential point of the entire decorative ideal — the ability to *grasp the whole* and to bring to it a fresh and unified conception — was abandoned somewhere on the way.

Decoration, it must be remembered, is a structural thing.

Everything in the house is conserved to one end. The walls are plain and neutral, the structural lines are straight and unobtrusive, and the low type of furniture is out of the line of vision.

Serenity or repose in the home responds to the needs of many, but this is not to be confused with *drabness*.

Things which are interesting or beautiful in themselves, but which do not supply definite decorative values have their place in the art gallery, museum, or antiquarian society.

"No junk!" is the cry of the new interior.

Setting of Shaw's *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, as produced by the Curtain Club of the University of Texas. In a bill of four one-act plays two sets of dark-toned curtains were used as a background throughout. (See Mr. Sowers' article on preceding pages.)

Scene from *A Kiss for Cinderella*, as produced by Maude Adams at the Empire Theatre, New York. The central portion of the setting was designed after a painting by Maxfield Parrish.

News of Theatre Art and Artists

GRANVILLE BARKER came to this country several weeks ago and aided in the staging of his adaptation of Stevenson's *The Wrong Box*. The play opened at the Little Theatre in New York during February, under the title *The Morris Dance*. Mr. Barker is now on a lecture tour which will take him as far as the Pacific Coast.

Miss Grace Griswold, whose plan for a national "university of the theatre" was noted in the last issue of this magazine, has organized *The Theatre Workshop*, in an effort to centralize the various creative interests of the theatre. This is to be a forerunner of a laboratory for the playwright, the scenic artist, the actor and the producer. A group of "Associate Players" has already appeared at schools and at the Neighborhood Playhouse, in a repertory which includes Browning's *In a Balcony* and Sutro's *A Marriage Has Been Arranged*.

The Arden Gallery in New York held during February a retrospective exhibition of costumes, stage models and designs, under the direction of Mrs. John W. Alexander. The showing was largely of historical souvenirs and curiosities, but there were some models and designs representative of the newer methods of staging. Among the artists who exhibited were C. Raymond Johnson, J. Woodman Thompson and Robert E. Jones.

Jacques Copeau, the greatest of the progressives in the French theatre of to-day, and director of the famous *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* in Paris, is now in this country. He will give readings and lectures in the leading American cities.

Alfred Krehmborg, well known as a leader of the modernist group of poets, has organized with two dancers, Margaret Swain and Harmon Cheshire, a company called "The Poem-Mimes." A tour of the entire country has been arranged, during which the three performers will appear at little theatres, clubs and private houses. Mr. Krehmborg will recite his poems to the accompaniment of dance interpretations. Each program will include a production of the poet's rhythmic fantasy *Lima Beans*.

The Washington Square Players presented on January 14, as their annual gift performance to subscribers, Andreyev's *The Life of Man*. The regular holiday bill included *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, *Another Way Out* by Lawrence Langner, the Japanese tragedy *Bushido*, and *Altruism*, a satire from the German. The current bill is: Maeterlinck's *The Death of Tintagiles*, Bosworth Crocker's *The Last Straw*, *The Hero of Santa Maria* by K. S. Goodman and Ben Hecht, and *Impudence* by Raoul Auernheimer.

A new experimental organization has been formed in New York, named "The Morningside Players," with Elmer L. Reizenstein and Barrett H. Clark among the leaders. Mr. Reizenstein's *The Iron Cross* was presented at the Comedy Theatre in February, as the first production in the club's series.

Plans are being made for the production in Boston, during the Spring, of Percy Mackaye's community masque *Caliban: By the Yellow Sands*.

The Stage Society of New York presented early in February Arturo Giovanitti's *As It Was in the Beginning*, the most startlingly realistic of all the war plays yet produced.

Under the direction of Thomas H. Dickinson the Pittsburgh Theatre Association has been organized for the purpose of producing worth-while plays in the newer method, but "not as an amateur or workshop experiment." The first production, given in February, was *The Paper Merchant*, a Japanese drama.

At the Little Theatres

THE LITTLE THEATRE PLAYERS of Rochester organized early in the year, and on February 16 gave their first production as follows: *Fancy Free* by Stanley Houghton, *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge, *A Marriage Has Been Arranged* by Alfred Sutro, and *The Pierrot of the Minute* by Ernest Dowson.

The committee in charge of the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit sent out in December tentative announcements of a subscription season of five plays, to be given from January to May. The immediate response made possible the appointment of Sam Hume as director of the playhouse for the season. The first bill was given on January fifth and sixth, and included *The Revesby Sword Play*, the old English miracle play *Abraham and Isaac*, and K. S. Goodman's *Ephraim and the Bear*. The second production was Lawrence Housman's three-act poetic play *The Chinese Lantern*, given in February. William Poel and Granville Barker have delivered lectures for subscribers to the series of plays.

The Prairie Playhouse at Galesburg produced in December a Christmas fantasy by J. A. Crafton, entitled *The Strange Star*. The January bill included Stanley Houghton's *The Dear Departed*, Percival Wilde's *The Noble Lord*, Howard Stedman's *The Poet Writes a Song*, and Anton Tchekov's *The Bear*. In February William Vaughan Moody's *The Great Divide* was presented.

The Little Theatre Society of Indiana presented in December *Polly of Pogue's Run* by W. O. Bates, *Laughing Gas* by Theodore Dreiser, the thirteenth-century French farce *Pierre Patelin* and *The Lost Silk Hat* by Lord Dunsany. The January bill included *Duty* by Seumas O'Brien, *The Lost Silk Hat*, and Oliphant Downs' *The Maker of Dreams*. With this bill Carl Bernhardt's connection with the society as managing director terminated. In February the students and faculty of Indiana University presented Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* as the fourth production of the Little Theatre series.

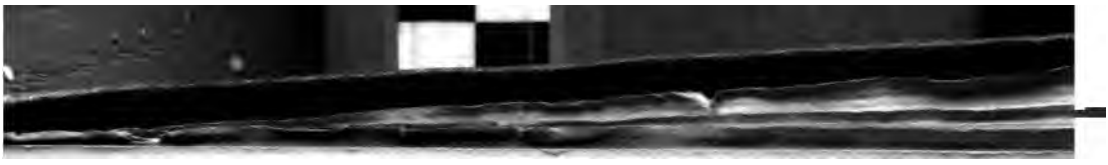
The Chicago Little Theatre ended another chapter of its story in February, when it went into bankruptcy. There have been rumors of financial trouble since December, when complications over the leasing of the Fine Arts Theatre resulted in the abandonment of a proposed season there. Since that time productions have been given only irregularly in the Little Theatre. If the organization goes out of existence, it will do so with a record of having contributed more than any other to the success of the art theatre movement in this country.

The Little Playhouse Company of Cincinnati produced in December G. K. Chesterton's *Magic*; in January *She Must Marry a Doctor* by Solomon Rabinowitsch, *The Little King* by Witter Bynner and *The Merry Death* by Nicholas Evreinov; and in February *Blanchette* by Brieux. The season has been so successful that the company will close with last year's deficit cancelled. An autumn tour of other cities is planned.

The Players Workshop of Chicago presented in December *An Idyll of the Shops* by Ben Hecht and K. S. Goodman, *The Lullaby* by Louise Hubbard, and *Snow-White* by Marie L. Marsh. The January bill included *Poet's Heart* by Maxwell Bodenheim, *The Children of Tomorrow* by Maud Moore-Clement, and *How Very Shocking* by Julian Thompson. The February program was:

Setting for *Abraham and Isaac*, designed by Katherine McEwen. Produced at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit. Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.

Scene from *The Chinese Lantern*. Setting designed by Sam Hume. Produced at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit. Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.



Mrs. Margaret Calhoun by Maxwell Bodenheim and Ben Hecht, *Skeletons Out of the Closet* by Elisha Cook, and *You Can Get Away from It* by Frederick Bruegger.

The Montclair Players, recently organized with the intention of combining community drama and experimental theatre ideals, have produced the following three bills: Sudermann's *The Faraway Princess*, Dunsany's *King Argimenes*, and Sutro's *The Bracelet*; Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon*, Tarkington's *Beauty and the Jacobin*, and Dunsany's *The Tents of the Arabs*; and Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*.

The Provincetown Players, who produce at their workshop theatre in New York plays written by their members, presented in early January *Bored* by John Chapin Mosher, *A Long Time Ago* by Floyd Dell, and *Fog* by Eugene O'Neill. The second January bill included *Pan* by Kenneth MacNichol, *Winter's Night* by Neith Boyce, and *The Dollar* by David Pinski. The February bill was of war plays: *Ivan's Homecoming* by Irwin Grannich, *Barbarians* by Rita Wellman, and *The Sniper* by Eugene O'Neill.

The Little Playhouse Company of St. Louis, using professional actors, and appearing in the new Artists Guild Theatre, has produced the following plays in seven bills since November: Galsworthy's *Joy*, Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Lady Gregory's *The Golden Apple*, Ibsen's *Ghosts* Browning's *In a Balcony*, Hawkbridge's *The Florist Shop*, O'Brien's *Duty*, Ballard's *Good News*, Phillips' *Nero's Mother*, I. L. Caragiale's *An Eye for an Eye*, Rice's *Arduin*, and Alice Brown's *Joint Owners in Spain*.

The Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, presented in December and January *The Married Woman* by Chester Bailey Fernald. On the evening of January 27 Wilfrid Wilson Gibson read a group of his poems, and the Neighborhood Players presented two of his plays, *Womenkind* and *Holiday*.

Another chapter in the history of the Los Angeles Little Theatre closed in January. Last autumn the playhouse was taken over by the Players Producing Company, of which Miss Aline Barnsdall is director. In November *Nju*, from the Russian of Ossip Dymow, was presented under the direction of Richard Ordynski. Later in the month Zoë Akins' *Papa* was produced, to be followed in early December by this bill of one-act plays: *Conscience* by Oren Taft Jr., one of the *Anatol* episodes, and Yeats' *The Shadowy Waters*. A series of morning and matinée presentations was given for children, the play being Florence Kiper Frank's *The Return of Proserpine*. The last production was *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* by D. H. Lawrence. Richard Ordynski remained in Los Angeles to produce during January, at another theatre, the von Hofmannsthal version of *Everyman*, in George Sterling's translation. Miss Barnsdall's company will not resume productions until next season, when they hope to play in both Los Angeles and San Francisco.

A new little theatre company has been organized in Baltimore, under the name "The Vagabond Players." Two performances are given each week, and there are to be five changes of bill during the season. A theatre has been procured which seats only fifty people.

The Drama League Players of Washington, D. C., who recently organized for the purpose of establishing a little theatre in that city, have presented two plays this season, Rudolph Besier's *Lady Patricia* and Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan*.

The New Published Plays

WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYS, appearing as Volume XX of the Drama League Series, presents four of the single-act pieces produced by the Washington Square Players. The only one of prime importance, because the only one marked by sincerity without cynicism, is the now famous little tragedy by Lewis Beach, *The Clod*. It is powerfully realistic and compellingly dramatic. Next in value is Alice Gerstenberg's *Overtones*, an interesting, if somewhat cynical, psychological comedy. *Eugenically Speaking*, by Edward Goodman, and *Helena's Husband*, by Philip Moeller, are notably clever in parts but both are marred to some extent by the smartness and shallow philosophy that vitiate much of the output of the Washington Square school. The book is well worth owning. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company. 75 cents.)

THREE WELSH PLAYS, by Jeannette Marks, is a volume of dramatic episodes from Welsh life. They are characterized by a certain quaint charm and by literary value, but have little dramatic intensity. *The Merry Merry Cuckoo* is the most effective of the three. It is sweet and sentimental, rather than vigorous; but it has enough "body" to make it worth producing. *Welsh Honeymoon* likewise is worthy of trial on small stages. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.00.)

THE POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL, by Eleanor Gates, long successful on the stage and long ago published as a novel, is now published as a play. It is one of the most important works yet written by an American dramatist. It cleverly carries characters of the workaday world into a series of fantastic and imaginative episodes. A genuinely emotional story of the real characters is woven into the dream story, and the whole is set forth in dialogue that is exceptionally clean-cut. You should read the book for the good of your soul, and to revive your faith in the coming of a real drama written by Americans. (New York: Arrow Publishing Company. $1.00.)

A NIGHT AT AN INN, by Lord Dunsany, is an excellent example of that blending of realistic and imaginative which is the most typical phase of the new drama. The play is simple, direct in unfoldment, and powerfully dramatic. It is written in prose that is singularly clean-cut, crisp and suggestive. No student of the modern drama should be without it. (Published as No. 1 of the Neighborhood Playhouse Plays. New York: The Sunwise Turn. 25 cents.)

FIVE PLAYS, by Lord Dunsany. This is a new edition of the first volume of Dunsany plays, containing *The Gods of the Mountain*, *The Golden Doom*, *King Argimenes*, *The Glittering Gate*, and *The Lost Silk Hat*. With the possible exception of Shaw there is no dramatist more in the public eye than Dunsany and certainly none more deservedly popular among the progressive theatre groups. Every one of these five plays is eminently readable and stageable. Not to know them is to argue oneself quite out of the new theatre movement. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

DUTY AND OTHER IRISH COMEDIES, by Seumas O'Brien, contains five one-act plays of uneven merit. All are characterized by humor, raciness of speech, and bits of philosophic observation. But in general the dramatic element is lacking to an unfortunate degree. *Duty* is the best of the five, and has been produced by the Irish Players and at some of the little theatres in this country. All are worth reading in an idle hour. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL, translated from the Russian of Nicolay Gogol by Thomas Seltzer, is a novelty among translated Russian works in that it is light in tone and frankly artificial. It should be in every library if only as the typical example of the Russian "well-made" play—an echo of the French "sure-fire" farce-comedy. It is clearly too far outmoded for the art theatres

but is well suited for production by the amateur groups that desire nothing better than to amuse themselves and their friends. The Russian names should be rigidly censored. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $1.00.)

THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYS is the title of three volumes containing nine of the plays produced by the Provincetown Players. From the three volumes it would be possible to choose four or five plays to make a single volume of undoubted merit. In the first group Eugene O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* is the only important piece. It is a serious study of sea life — not particularly dramatic except in the final moment, but unmistakably good work. In the second volume *Suppressed Desires* by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell, despite its reversion to an older form of farce-comedy, stands out above its weaker companion-pieces. It is a clever take-off on Freudian theories, and is worth reading and producing. The third volume is less uneven in quality, but contains nothing that stands out as preëminently actable. Neith Boyce's *The Two Sons* is serious and well written — in some ways the most promising play of the whole nine — and with exceedingly good acting should be effective on the stage. Alfred Krehmborg's *Lima Beans* is a quaint and amusing experiment in rhythmic fantasy. O'Neill's *Before Breakfast* ends the volume with a tragic and unpleasant bit of realism, which is more short story than drama. (New York: Frank Shay. Each volume 50 cents.)

MALVALOCA, translated from the Spanish of Serafin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero, forms the nineteenth volume of the Drama League Series. It is an entertaining play of a conventional type. The authors write facilely, and create a real atmosphere around the action. But the action itself is weak and without dramatic tension. It is good to have such an example of contemporary Spanish drama in English; but we are not sure that it is worthy of a place in a series supposed to represent masterpieces. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company. 75 cents.)

ANOTHER WAY OUT, by Lawrence Langner, is a clever, trifling, and rather interesting satire on the new freedom, as it is being manifested in love and in art. It is good "light" material for balancing little theatre bills. The futurist studio setting affords opportunity for the scenic artist, and the dialogue is of the sort that plays well in any hands. (New York: Frank Shay. 35 cents.)

PUNISHMENT, by Louise Burleigh and Edward Hale Bierstadt, is a four-act play dealing with prison evils and prison reform. The first act is a little too clearly "exposition," none too facilely handled, and most of the second is a description of prison horrors. In the other two acts the authors find their stride beautifully, and present a story that is dramatically tense, and effective in compelling the reader's interest in an important social problem. It is a play worth reading, and it promises much for the future of the two authors. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. $1.00.)

CONFESSIONAL AND OTHER AMERICAN PLAYS, by Percival Wilde, is a group of widely varied one-act plays, which just miss being sound, effective work. At least three, the grimly realistic and unpleasantly dramatic *According to Darwin*, the passively interesting *Confessional*, and the lightly amusing *A Question of Morality*, might be staged with some success. But with increased power of characterization, and growing discrimination between stage language and sincere speech, we hope for better work in the author's next volume. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. $1.20.)

THE SON OF MAN, by B. Russell Herts. This four-act play might better be called "Jesus the Socialist." The author set out to treat the Christ-story in terms of modern liberal thought; but he was neither poet enough nor dramatist enough to immortalize his interesting and daring conception in a work of art. The incidents are not well chosen, and the dialogue is often unpoetic. The commonplace phrasing is the more noticeable by contrast with occasional bits of unusual beauty. Still, the play is worth reading as an exceptional attempt at something new. (New York: Frank Shay. 50 cents.)

THE NAMELESS ONE, by Anne Cleveland Cheney, is a closet-drama of an outworn type. The story is somewhat artificial, but would be serviceable enough if clothed with inspired poetry. The language is "soft"—there are too many anons, and wenches and busses, and two much of water that plashes, and ferny grots and posies. The blank verse is vexingly monotonous, without any understanding of the beauty to be found in variation. A tense moment or two, an occasional good line, an atmosphere true to the times—these the play achieves, but nothing more. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. $1.00.)

THE ROAD TOGETHER, by George Middleton, is a four-act play of that author's usual sort. It is another serious study of American domestic life, and like the others it is well written and interesting. But one is conscious that Middleton is still the writer rather than the dramatist, the analyst rather than the dynamic artist of the theatre. He has done so well in the past that he should do better now. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. $1.00.)

THE MARRIAGE GAME, by Anne Crawford Flexner, is a comedy of the conventional sort well known to Broadway. The story is novel enough to "get by," the characters are largely types, and the dialogue is clever in general but cheap in spots. The literary value is slight, and the production probably would be better than the book. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. $1.00.)

THREE PLAYS, by Padraic Colum, includes *The Fiddler's House*, *The Land*, and *Thomas Muskerry*, all of which have been produced at the Abbey Theatre. They are different from most Irish plays in being deeper, more serious and more concerned with the fundamental questions of economic life. Their one common lack is climax, and there is too little of the economy of language and action which is the very heart of drama. The prose dialogue is musical, the atmosphere is well developed, and sincerity breathes through every page. But they are excellent dramatic sketches rather than plays. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

New Books About the Theatre

PLAY PRODUCTION IN AMERICA, by Arthur Edwin Krows. The man of the theatre will find this an immensely interesting and useful book. It is crammed with facts about the organization and activities of every department of the commercial playhouse. Some of the material is so elementary that even a child should find it trite, and some of it is so technical that only the specialist will care to dig it out point by point; but it will be an exceptional reader who does not find something of value and interest in the volume. Our only complaint is that the author has included too much; he occasionally wanders outside his field of telling what's done in a theatre and how, and flounders in theoretical discussions which might more wisely be left to other pens. We disagree with much that he says; we agree with more. On the whole we are mighty glad that he has put so much first-hand inside information where the expert and tyro alike can put hand to it. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. $2.00.)

SIXTY YEARS OF THE THEATRE, by John Ranken Towse, presents an interesting, if disconnected, view of the American stage from 1870 to the end of the century, with some treatment of the English theatre in an earlier period. It is a good book of its kind, frankly discursive, and comprised of random memories, but packed with the sort of fugitive material that is too often lost to later generations. Few readers will find it endurable to read the twenty-nine chapters consecutively (pity the poor reviewer!), but most

theatregoers will find pleasure in browsing through the volume at odd times; and stage historians of the future will find it invaluable as a source-book. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company. $2.50.)

REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN PLAYS, edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn, contains in unabridged form twenty-five plays by American dramatists. It affords a full survey of the development of American drama up to the beginning of the twentieth century, although one might quarrel with the selection offered as representative of the later period. First come the imitative and native plays of the days of Godfrey, Tyler and Dunlap; then those of the formative period, of writers like Payne, Willis, Julia Ward Howe, Boucicault, Steele Mackaye, and Bronson Howard; and finally a selection of the contemporary period, with works of Clyde Fitch, Moody, Percy Mackaye, Augustus Thomas, and others. To the student of the American drama the volume is absolutely indispensable; and the general reader will find in it many works not in print elsewhere, such as Belasco and Long's *Madame Butterfly*, Edward Sheldon's *The Boss*, and Rachel Crothers' *He and She*. Each play is preceded by a descriptive introduction, so that the volume is a contribution to the scholarly as well as the popular library of American drama. (New York: The Century Company. $2.75.)

SOME NOTES ON SHAKESPEARE'S STAGE AND PLAYS, by William Poel, is a reprint of an essay by the director of the Elizabethan Stage Society. It is probably the clearest short treatment of the Elizabethan stage problem thus far written, and some of the conclusions entirely controvert the generally accepted theories. It is not a scholar's dry analysis of a dead subject, but an artist-student's treatment of a matter which should be of live interest to every other artist and student of the theatre of to-day. (Longmans, Green and Company. 40 cents.)

CHARLES FROHMAN, MANAGER AND MAN, by Isaac F. Marcosson and Daniel Frohman, is a discursive biography of the famous American theatre magnate. To quote Barrie's appreciative foreword, it is "all about the humorous, gentle, roughly educated, very fine American gentleman." The book is entertainingly written, in a journalistic vein, with the human interest always stressed. There are whole chapters of anecdote, but these are bound up with much historical matter of value to students of the stage. If there is also the story of the development of those evils that have degraded the art of the theatre in America, it is only charitable now to put the blame on "the system." The book is at least the most interesting of recent theatre biographies. (New York: Harper and Brothers. $2.00.)

MUSIC AND BAD MANNERS, by Carl Van Vechten, is a volume of essays devoted largely to modern tendencies in music. The essay *Shall We Realize Wagner's Ideals?* is of particular interest to artists of the theatre. It is an arraignment of the producers of opera, who, almost without exception, follow the Bayreuth tradition, and who fail to bring to the opera stage the artists who might create a proper atmospheric background for a Wagnerian production. There is much about that important and somewhat elusive artist, Adolphe Appia, and something about Gordon Craig and the Russians. It is a pleasure to note that the essay is not marked by those puerile accusations of plagiarism against Craig which characterized a former Van Vechten essay on the same subject. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $1.50.)

JOURNALISM VERSUS ART, by Max Eastman. Every American artist, in or out of the theatre, should be compelled to read the first two essays of this book, entitled *What Is the Matter With Magazine Art?* and *Magazine Writing*. Its clear and stimulating arraignment of "the system" is likely to bring about one of those re-valuations which mark stages in the growth of every artist. The analogy between the popular magazine and the popular theatre is too easily recognized to need emphasizing here. Do not miss this book. (New York: Alfred A Knopf. $1.00.)

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

An illustrated quarterly published in November, February, May and August by Sheldon Cheney under the auspices of the Theatre Committee of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, Michigan.

SHELDON CHENEY, *Editor*

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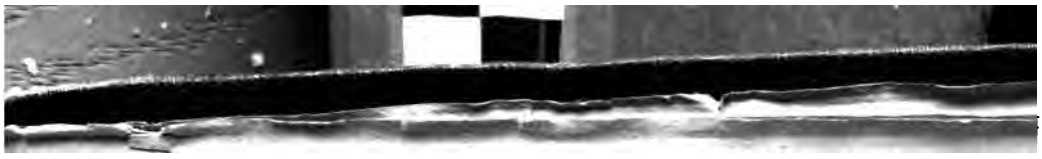
Editorial

"THE drama requires defenders. Someone should arise and speak the truth." And so David Belasco rises and speaks; and his utterances are featured by a leading New York newspaper, over the well-known Belasco signature.

The foes against which the true drama must be defended, it seems, are the little theatres — the amateur, semi-professional and experimental playhouses, in whose work, we confess, we blindly had faith until Mr. Belasco set us right. But let him speak: "Theatres and acting organizations devoted to false ideals are not new, but never, until this season, have they been so vicious, vulgar and degrading. They have multiplied alarmingly. . . . . This so-called new art of the theatre is but a flash in the pan of inexperience. It is the cubism of the theatre — the wail of the incompetent and degenerate. . . . . The whole thing merely shows an ignorance and a diseased and depraved understanding and appreciation of any art at all."

We wonder! Is no lasting good for dramatic art to come from the "alarming" activity outside the conservative, well-organized and well-fed theatre? Is the new art of the theatre, to which, incidentally, we have dedicated this little magazine in all humbleness, to prove but one more phase of *fin-de-siècle* decadence? It is easy to remember the long series of safe-and-sane productions associated with the Belasco name: pleasing plays, well enough acted, in settings beautifully done according to a false formula — everything polished down smooth, and interesting — but always uninspired. In contrast there come to mind moments experienced in the experimental theatres: a bit of poetry from Lord Dunsany, made into music on the tongues of unspoiled actors; the tense horror when two human souls stood out naked in all their ugliness and petty self-blindness; the spiritual satisfaction when in silent movement before dark-hued curtains two lovers worked out a lyric idyll. These are heights that Mr. Belasco has not climbed, and depths that he has not plumbed. We know that he never will understand; but we believe that after all it is best to give the revolutionists their chance. They may stumble on something lastingly worth while, in those regions outside the range of his safe-and-sane artistry.

In the meantime we hope to hear all there is to be said on the other side. Mr. Belasco has stated the case clearly, insofar as art is concerned. It only remains for Mr. Ziegfeld to protest against the salaciousness of the new drama to have the case against the little theatres complete.



The Quarterly Notebook

The Quarterly Notebook is a periodical devoted to art and letters. Among its contributors are to be found Messrs Arthur Symons, Sturge Moore, Ezra Pound, William Osler, W. G. Blaikie-Murdoch, Dard Hunter, and E. Basil Lupton. Edited by Alfred Fowler. A few of the papers appearing during 1916 will serve to give some idea of its scope:

Russia the Invincible, by Mr Arthur Symons,
Search in Spain, by Mr Arthur Symons,
Awoi No Uye, a Japanese Noh drama by Mr Ezra Pound,
Creators, Transmuters, and Transmitters, by Sir William Osler,
The Art of Arnold Bennett, a critical study by Mr Blaikie-Murdoch,
Dickens as a Student of Scott, one of a series of essays on Dickens by Mr Basil Lupton,
The Art of John Masefield, by Mr Blaikie-Murdoch,

and a number of papers on Watteau, Stevenson, Brontë, and others of similar interest.

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THE QUARTERLY NOTEBOOK

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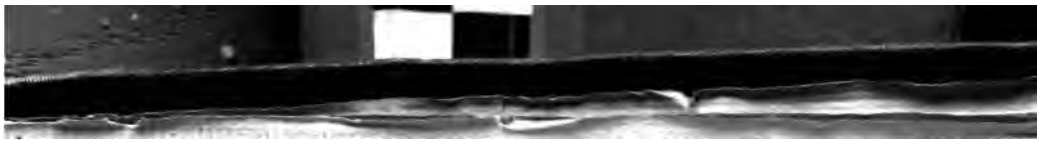

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

VOLUME I ❦ NUMBER 3
MAY 1917

THE DIAL

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Realism and Suggestion

"THE popularization of Ugliness, the bearing of false witness against Beauty — these are the achievements of the realistic theatre. I wish my school and journal to stand as my protest against this anarchistic tendency of the modern theatre.

"The modern realistic theatre, forgetful of all the laws of art, sets out to reflect the times. It reflects a small particle of the times, it drags back a curtain and exposes to our view an agitated caricature of Man and his Life, a figure gross in its attitude and hideous to look upon.

"This is true neither to life nor to art. It has never been the purpose of art to reflect and make uglier the ugliness of things, but to transform and make the already beautiful more beautiful; and, in following this purpose, art shields us with sweet influences from the dark sorrows of our weakness."— GORDON CRAIG, in *A Living Theatre.*

"By means of suggestion you may bring on the stage a sense of all things — the rain, the sun, the wind, the snow, the hail, the intense heat—but you will never bring them there by attempting to wrestle and close with Nature, in order that you may seize some of her treasure and lay it before the eyes of the multitude. . . . Actuality, accuracy of detail, is useless upon the stage."— GORDON CRAIG, in *On the Art of the Theatre.*

Elizabethan England as sketched by Joseph Urban for James K. Hackett's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Two points are worthy of special note: the lovely composition of tree, roofs and bridge, and the fact that the feeling is absolutely English, and, in spite of the similarity of architecture, not in the least Teutonic.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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The Myth of Urban

By KENNETH MACGOWAN

AMERICA has made Joseph Urban into a myth. And like most myths, it is false as well as true, trivial as well as stupendous, a part that tries to play the drama of the whole. It is made, like our theatre of to-day, out of newspaper triviality and the deadening levels of our absurd Broadway and Keokuk producing system. In the last analysis it is a mischievous myth—for us and for Joseph Urban.

The myth of Urban is something like this: Gargantuan swaths of color; stairs, platforms, pyramids of carpentry; pearls and pillars in the amber moonlight; rivers of roses; Wanamakers's entire drapery department on parade, all in an endless stream of pictures turned out by the scenic trust to interfere with the tunes of Irving Berlin. Or, at the very most, a handsome mausoleum for the preservation of the histrionic remains of James K. Hackett.

It is a mischievous myth, because it is so plausible and so shallow. It is a tragic myth, because behind it sits the real Urban, aching for a chance to "discard my elaborate scenery and all my concessions to a conventional stage for the simple, clear, expressive scenery which is not beautiful, but full of meaning; scenery which doesn't want applause, but is content to be what it ought to be, the right frame for the drama."

Obviously if Urban can do what he says he wants to do—which amounts merely to conceding the existence of a brilliant European career of which American myth-mongers know almost nothing—he is a victim of circumstances. To take the most trivial of examples, the few people who have seen his illustrations for German fairy tales have been amazed beyond measure to find in them a technique and feeling a hundred times finer and more delicate than appears in the sketches for scenery with which they were familiar; the explanation is simply that scenic sketches are not an exhibition of an artist's technique, but shorthand notes for the reproducing craftsmen in the studio. Like blue prints, they are keys to a larger art, not the art itself.

As for the actual productions, there a critic might ask Mr. Urban why he bothers at all to do work which must contain

"concessions to a conventional stage"; why he does not wait, like many a younger artist, for the one play of a season which really calls for his talents. There you discount the intense practicality of the architect in Urban. To do his best work technically he needs a manufacturing studio, employing European-trained craftsmen; to support a studio one cannot be too finicky about the work that comes to hand. America sensed that practicality immediately and took advantage of it.

Urban has fought back—not unsuccessfully—by matching his genius perfectly to each problem presented. For the musical show he makes a delicious spectacle; for the Hackett Shakespeare he produces an elaborate dignity that is a match for the "Shakesperean" acting. But unquestionably Urban has not been able to "down" the American theatre system, and it has put this myth of spectacular decoration upon him.

To begin with, the long-run system of Broadway seldom produces a play which has the temerity to try to wed art to popularity. If it does produce one, how much chance has that piece to reach the theatrical provinces? The result in the case of Urban is that the road towns—the bulk of America—know only his musical productions, *The Follies*, *Flora Bella*, *Pom Pom*, and *Around the Map*. They have no knowledge of the five serious productions more or less fleetingly familiar to Broadway—*The Garden of Paradise*, *Macbeth*, *The Merry Wives*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Caliban*. New York knows nothing of the varied array of twelve operas which Urban mounted for the Boston Opera House. And Boston is ignorant of the forty or fifty serious productions made in Austria and Germany. There were some of us, even in favored Boston, who, watching Urban's warfare with operatic convention, had to take the pungent mediævalism of his *Peleas*, the splendid dignity of his *Monna Vanna*, the fine, mannered grace of his *Don Giovanni*, as a small but efficacious antidote to the amazingly fertile invention and decorative fecundity of his other less vital settings. Small wonder that the bulk of America cherishes the Urban myth.

Perhaps you begin to gather that the Urban myth is a little thin—a journalese product of America's amusement gamble. The real story of the artist and his work sounds much more mythical and marvelous—and it is far from thin. It begins with a boy who went to art school for two years while his father, one of Vienna's leading educators, thought he was studying law. At sixteen Joseph Urban was aiding his father by adapting to Austrian forms the Sloyd work of Sweden, which the

elder Urban had begun to introduce. After the strictest of classical training in the Franz Joseph Gymnasium, he not only undertook to study art while his parent imagined him absorbed in the Austrian equivalent of Blackstone, but attended the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts in the mornings and the Polytechnic in the afternoons. In one he studied architecture from the side of art; in the other, its practical, structural aspects. Half through his training, parental wrath and youthful idealism cut off Urban's income. But by that time he stood so high in the opinion of Baron Hasenauer, president of the Academy and architect to the Emperor, that he obtained a scholarship in the schools and employment in Baron Hasenauer's own studio. In 1897, when Urban was twenty-three, through with the Polytechnic and facing only a year more in the Academy, he entered upon the amazing adventure of a commission from the young Khedive of Egypt to decorate and furnish the Abdin Palace in Cairo.

Upon such a beginning it is easy to build a remarkable career. In the next few years Urban made castles for nobles like Count Carl Esterhaszy, and country villas for the rich of Vienna, and won prize competitions for various public buildings, parks and bridges, including the Ratskellar in the Rathaus of Vienna and the Czar's Bridge over the Neva in Petrograd. Two imperial jubilees, in 1898 and 1908, came under his direction. In the midst of the activities, his decorative genius took a new and significant turn. He began to decorate and arrange art galleries at expositions. One of these America saw at St. Louis in 1904. The most celebrated in many ways was at Paris in 1900; for Urban, as sole juror of the Austrian exhibit, finding more pictures than he could hang, calmly excluded all but those in the most modern spirit. Out of the fight which naturally resulted, came one of the most celebrated of the secessionist societies, the Hagenbund, founded by Urban and housed ultimately in a superb building of his designing.

The creation of exhibition rooms suiting in their color, composition and materials, the art work displayed, obviously points towards the scenic stage. But it was Urban's work in book illustration—work ranging from fairy tales and children's songs to German historical and patriotic volumes—which interested the theatre directors of Vienna in inducing Urban to enter their houses. In 1904 his friendship with the director of the Vienna Hof Burgtheater led him into partnership with Heinrich Lefler in the designing of scenery. During the next eight years he made settings for the Hof Burgtheater, the Vienna Hof Opern-

theater, the Komische Oper in Berlin, and theatres in Braunschweig, Mannheim, Cologne, Stuttgart, Lauchstaett, Charlottenburg, Hamburg, Duisburg and Budapest, and many other houses. In the spring of 1912, three designs of his were bought by the Boston Opera House, *Peleas et Melisande*, *Haensel und Gretel* and *Tristan und Isolde*. In the fall of that year he came to Boston as artistic director of the Opera House, and in the two years preceding the outbreak of the war manufactured in his own American studio scenery for *The Tales of Hoffman*, *Louise*, *The Jewels of the Madonna*, *Don Giovanni*, *Djamileh*, *The Secret of Suzanne*, *The Love of the Three Kings*, *Monna Vanna* and *Die Meistersinger*, all of which were mounted under his personal direction. *Otello*, *Parsifal* and *Pagliacci* he prepared for the company's visit to Paris and to London in the spring and summer of 1914.

Then came the war and the end of the Boston Opera Company. Urban turned to New York — and the road — for artistic opportunity. That chapter hardly needs retelling. It is part of both the true story and the myth.

In any consideration of Urban as a stage designer, his architectural side is of the first importance. His hard-won training and his brilliant successes in that field have colored all his work for the stage. On the surface it is evident in his total disregard of false perspective, which was the besetting sin of the old stage artist and which is still indulged in by the distinguished Russians, Bakst, Golovine and Roerich. Yet Urban would not be apt to indorse architectural study merely for that purpose; the victory of the plastic over perspective is too foregone. Urban stresses the importance of architectural training for the immense treasure-house it provides. A close study of architecture gives the scenic artist an amazing facility in the handling of periods. The knowledge of typical schools and orders is at his fingertips. He knows just as unerringly how he may safely depart from the conventional in any period and achieve a precise effect. The whole art of design, from roof structure to furniture detail, is at the architect's command. It is easy to trace in Urban's immense and varied fertility the knowledge and training acquired in the architectural studies of Academy and Polytechnic.

Unmistakably, Urban's understanding of the supreme place of light on the stage comes also from his work as architect. Public buildings aren't supplied with footlights, either inside or out. The infinite shadows of daylight and the depths of the moon have played their part in the decoration of wall and gate,

When Joseph Urban mounted *Twelfth Night* for Phyllis Neilson-Terry, he used fixed portals to achieve a unity of impression and a quick change of scene. For Olivia's garden green arches were applied to the portals to harmonize with the clipped hedges and trees behind. In the scene shown below, he has altered the portals by the introduction of barred windows, put wood and stone work beneath the connecting arch, and achieved the prison scene.

The hall of the third act of *The Love of the Three Kings* as set at the Boston Opera House. For two of the three scenes Urban used a permanent skeleton-setting of pillars and wall, with certain other elements altered to indicate change of place. The result was a curious unity.

column and tower, since man first built; and within his structures the wise architect has always schemed out sources of light that enhance as well as illuminate. It is small wonder that Urban says: "Paint not so much with colors, surfaces, and artificial perspectives as with the actual glories of light itself." He has found in the theatre a world where he plays the god of the lighted heavens to the structures that he builds.

It might seem at first as if Urban's broken color — the thing that makes his canvas live as wall and fabric, and give off a vitality of hue which flat tones can never reach — came from the technique of the modern painter. Yet it was Urban's appreciation of the shadowing and dramatizing power of light, playing upon architectural forms, which made him seek a color-surface that would respond.

From his architectural past come other distinctive features of Urban's art. From casement and portico he has learned how the most immense of walls may be scaled down to intimacy; on the great Opera House stage in Boston he produced the intimate reality of his *Peleas* by playing practically all the scenes on small raised platforms. The use of platforms also aids in getting away from the customary convention-laden atmosphere of the theatre; but for this purpose, Urban's portals, or permanent entrances just inside the proscenium, have been still more effective. With these, each set designed to meet the mood of the play or its physical necessities, he has broken the deadly spell of the gold proscenium frame and lifted us into a land where reality or fantasy — anything but playacting — was ready waiting for us. It was surely the architect that thus compromised between theatre structure and the needs of the play.

It is impossible to overestimate the extent to which Urban's architectural training has helped him to grasp the essence of stage design — the expression of the mood of the play. To the architect it is a doubly familiar problem. His design must express the structure of the building, and must comport with its purposes. That has always been the dual test of great architecture. It applies equally to scenery and the play. It is not beauty that we should seek in a production, but appropriateness. After that is found, the play will provide the emotion which its author conceived.

The complex quality of stage art — an interrelation of light, canvas, form, and meaning — finds an appreciative interpreter in the architect. He knows the multitude of detail, from sewerage to pure design, which goes to make a great building. He comes

to the theatre ready to appreciate the many-sided complexity of its finished art. He never makes the mistake of the painter who daubs a giant canvas and calls it a theatrical production. "The new art of the theatre," says Urban, "is more than a matter of scenery. It concerns the entire production. The scenery is vain unless it fits the play or the playing. The new art is a fusion of the pictorial with the dramatic. It demands not only new designers of scenery but new stage managers, who understand how to train actors in speech, gesture and pose to harmonize with the scenery. They must know how to key the play into the right spirit."

It is necessary to stress this point, because the Urban myth insists that its hero is a spreader of scenic glories, like some splendidly spiced butter, over the essential but obscured bread of dramatic sustenance. Urban is important as a scenic designer, Urban is great as an artist of the theatre, because he knows the small part that paint and canvas play in the production. Seldom enough since he came to America have worthy plays fallen to his lot under such auspices as permitted him to mount them with uncompromising truth; but in scheming out a new — and as yet entirely mental — production of *Tristan und Isolde*, he has written the utmost of his faith: "This drama has nothing to do with scenery in concrete forms. For this reason the production has to be as simple as possible — simple and serious enough for what happens in it. This is the only way to show the audience how uninteresting it is to know the place or locality, and to force them to follow the real drama. The principal figures see the world and everything around them with very different eyes. One must not look for columns, or wonderful details or a thousand little things, such as leaves of trees, or the sweet sunset, but must see only what Tristan and Isolde see. This is the problem which faces the producer."

Nothing, I think, can quite so clearly kill the Urban myth, can quite so surely show the essential greatness and simplicity of Urban's ideas and ambitions as a quotation from this same article on the mounting of *Tristan und Isolde*. In each of the first two acts he indicates how the shadowed, mellow light of unreality covers the love of the two, until at the end comes the cold light of conventional reality as Mark draws near. "In the third act," he writes, "we have the world where nothing exists but longing. Here there is nothing important for the artist but the lights. The lights are more important than scenery or anything else. My scenery gives the atmosphere of hopelessness,

Pagliacci, a sketch by Joseph Urban for the Interstate Opera Company. Simply, starkly, it sets an upland of North Italy against the Julian Alps. In this production the players' stage, usually solidly built upon the ground, is their van. In the first scene it remains half concealed behind the trees at the spectator's left; in the second it is brought out into the clear space at the back, hiding the Alps and centering attention upon itself.

Simplicity of line and richness of decorative material are combined to achieve an appropriate dignity in the Cathedral of the Holy Grail made by Joseph Urban for the production of *Parsifal* in Paris by the Boston Opera Company. (Reprinted from November *Theatre Arts Magazine.*)

the dying fall after the first frost. The music tells us what is going on in Tristan's soul. The lights have to make this visible. The play of light explains to the audience the slow awakening of Tristan out of unconsciousness, and when the rays slowly crawl from Tristan's feet to his body, and then to his face, we feel that Tristan *knows* Isolde is coming. This is one of the few big moments for the artist, not only to make light effects, but to follow with lights the drama. When Tristan knows that Isolde is coming it is the realization of his hopes. The sun goes behind a wall, because it has done its duty in explaining. Its last rays fall on the door through which they fight to come in. It sinks invisible into the sea, and a cold light grows over the whole scene! Mark!——"

Is it necessary to remark that Joseph Urban would do Wagner—and a score of great dramas—with the simplest of portals and a few properties and set pieces between?

Yes, it is necessary so long as the Urban myth prevails. And the Urban myth will undoubtedly prevail until our theatre system presents him with work and coöperation worthy of his talents. Which means, perhaps, until Urban realizes his own ideal of a national theatre.

EDITOR'S NOTE:—Additional illustrations of Urban's work will be found on pages 132, 141 and 142. This essay is the second in a series dealing with modern stage artists, an article about Robert Edmond Jones having appeared in the February issue.

The Modern Theatre

"NOT being a true and independent art and not exerting any power or any talent towards becoming a fine art, the present theatre continues to usurp the place of the true theatre, and retards its renaissance. And more than that: debasing the drama, and following the caprices of the playwright whom it has itself corrupted, it bars the way to the true dramatic poet. And yet more than that: it depraves the taste of the spectators, weakens the value of the theatre as an instrument of culture, and stifles in the public the true conception of the theatre as an art. In fact, were spiritual values as severely scrutinized by men as are the moral and material values, the modern theatre would have been long since proclaimed a great public calamity."—From *The Path of Gordon Craig*, by DR. GEORGE BALTRUSHAITIS.

The Chicago Little Theatre

By Cloyd Head

It is a curious fact that, to find the most vital expression of a movement which is revolutionizing the theatre, one must search in a remote playhouse with a stage no larger than a small room and an auditorium that will admit scarcely one hundred people. It is even stranger that the leadership of such a playhouse should be based chiefly upon the production of ritualistic drama, of Greek tragedy. Yet the Chicago Little Theatre is unquestionably the foremost experimental theatre in America, is indeed the only theatre in which may be traced clearly an evolution of those tendencies that are making towards a "new plastic and rhythmic drama."

The work of the Chicago Little Theatre has been related to this larger purpose in but a few of the more than forty productions. Upon these few its creative vitality has been to an almost exclusive degree concentrated. There has been experiment in others, even in those that were frankly an acceptance of compromise; but in them the experiment has proved more tentative, less significant in the value of its contribution to art-theatre development.

The Little Theatre was founded in the winter of 1912 by Maurice Browne and Ellen Van Volkenburg. It began with practically no capital and without endowment, depending upon memberships in the organization and upon patronage at the individual performances. The inevitably slow growth of popular interest, the fact that, even with success, the theatre could not hope more than to pay a bare minimum of expenditure, has made the first five years a constant struggle against failure. Only at the end of the current season has this struggle been for the time eliminated by an endowment through popular subscription of ten thousand dollars annually for three years. It is a struggle that has left its mark not only on individual productions, but on the very structure of the organization. It has prevented, for example, the formation of a permanent ensemble. It has compelled the theatre to modify its plans, to alter its methods. After all, it has deflected the vitality of those who are connected with it into lesser channels. This is not unlike the history of all such enterprises; what is remarkable is that the Little Theatre has been able to survive and to continue a far-reaching experiment.

The best-known production, and the one in which the Little

Theatre method reached its most symmetrical development, was *The Trojan Women*, taken in 1915, after two seasons of experiment, on an extensive tour. Those who had the privilege of seeing this production do not need to be told that it was the most effective representation of Greek tragedy that has been made in our generation. Ignoring traditional formulæ, it attempted, by the resources of the new stagecraft, to re-create the spirit of ritualistic drama.

The structural basis, following the method in which all ritualistic drama is designed, was a strict formalization sustained by the Chorus—consisting of five women, a group so accurately rehearsed that not a movement was untrained or indecisive—and in a lesser degree by the stage setting and by a slow progress of light that followed, without imitation, the mood of an overcast sky from dawn until darkness. Through this formalization the reality of the drama penetrated with a deep and tragic eloquence. During the intervals of the action, the Chorus remained motionless in a series of plastic groupings that held the rhythm intact as their movement and the blending of voices in the choral interludes carried it forward. The effect, particularly at the spiritual climax of the play, where the rhythms came to a focus centered in the tragic figure of Hecuba, was the strength of Greek drama at its highest potentiality.

This production, the first complete justification of the art-theatre method, developed that method in very difficult reaches to a majestic and harmonious design. It was without artifice in a technique that acknowledged no traditional influences, an assimilation of material so perfect as to be independent of imitation. If, in analysis, the exigencies of this material be ignored, the production of *The Trojan Women* organized art-theatre resource at a still premature point of development. Individually, the various factors creating this symmetry of effect were capable of further evolution.

The same sensitiveness to material that, in *The Trojan Women*, conditioned the lighting to a realistic basis, in the *Medea*—the second of the Greek plays, put into final form last season—caused an abandonment of all dependence upon realism, and the use of a purely emotional lighting that followed the swift and terrible action of the drama with an almost choral significance. In the experiment something of the reticence that characterized the lighting of *The Trojan Women* was lost. There was a lack of control, an over-emphasis, which, in the constant transition from one tone to another, at times became even physically

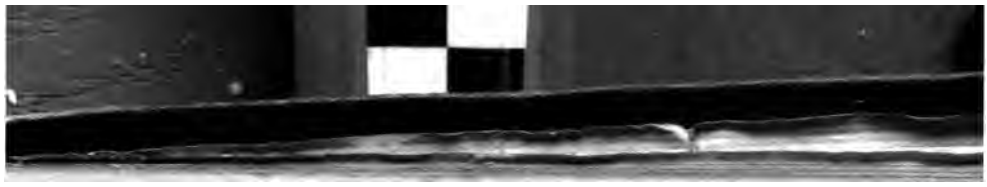
difficult to watch. Yet it was a powerful utilization of the vitality of light. In *Medea* also the choral method — perhaps the most far-reaching discovery of the Little Theatre — was more flexibly developed, recognizing, for example, the value of disintegration. Mature as this development has become under an absolute directorship, it remains doubtful whether the ultimate strength of expression through movement can be realized without a further compromise between this directorship and the creative vitality of the players.

The Little Theatre is not essentially a group organization; it reflects almost photographically the abilities and limitations of its directors. The spirit and tendency of the theatre is opposed to more than a restricted development of the group idea even under the most favorable conditions. Nevertheless, the one instance among the major productions, the *Passion Play in Silhouette*, in which the players were given freedom of expression, resulted in a new quality of line, a new coördination. Compared with *The Trojan Women* and *Medea*, the *Passion Play*, a series of static groupings against a background of light, was less complex, even less mature; but it revealed of necessity a further development.

The production of the Greek plays employed the art-theatre method to re-stage examples of a dramatic form consonant with the new technique. The third, and thus far the last in this group of ritualistic drama, was written for the Little Theatre by Maurice Browne, with the lighting, movement, all phases of the stagecraft to be utilized, inherent in the structure of the design. *The King of the Jews*, produced during Holy Week in 1916, was a rendering of the story of the crucifixion, dominated by the imagined figure of Jesus on the cross, and Mary watching in silence almost to the end of the play. In the space between these two the action, a compound of realism and of non-realism so balanced that the effect was at times almost reversed, took place. It was an interpretation that conceived Judas as the youngest and most devoted of the disciples who had betrayed Him in order to force upon Him leadership. In all the characters one felt the strange transforming power of the cross manifesting itself fully for the first time at a moment of overwhelming catastrophe. The main development of the drama was admirably designed, though in the writing a certain diffuseness at times blurred the emphasis. The rhythm, modifying the method of Greek drama, was sustained by choral interludes that rose to a liturgical finale, woven with the most delicate craftsmanship from the Bible and English Prayer Book.

Scene from *Medea* as produced at the Chicago Little Theatre. This is typical of the simplicity and appropriateness of the settings, and indicates the reliance placed upon grouping and acting. (Photograph by Eugene Hutchinson.)

Scene from *The Passion Play in Silhouette*, as produced by the Chicago Little Theatre Company. (Photograph by Eugene Hutchinson.) From "The New Movement in the Theatre," by courtesy of Mitchell Kennerley.



From the standpoint of complete production, *The King of the Jews* was in many respects the most mature expression of the Little Theatre technique. The emotional lighting, with a superstructure in realism, not only escaped that artificiality which had marred the use of it in *Medea*: it attained a resource in color, a finesse and control, which placed it beyond any illumination that, as far as one knows, has been devised in the American theatre. With this there came also a more subtle blending of voices, and in the directorship a greater authority and range of movement for choral rhythms. The background, adapted from Raymond Johnson's original design, cramped by a small stage, was a masterly solution of a most difficult problem.

The King of the Jews, the *Passion Play*, Florence Kiper Frank's *Jael*, Lou Wall Moore's dramatization of *The Happy Prince*, and my own play, *Grotesques*, were each an attempt in the technique of the art theatre from the dramaturgic standpoint. The Little Theatre, in spite of these productions by writers more or less unknown, cannot be said to have shown in the selection of plays the same daring or breadth and incisiveness of vision which it has employed in the staging of them. Apart from those that have been mentioned, if one except the fantasy called *An Evening With Columbine*, it has staged but three poetic plays: *On Baile's Strand* and *The Shadowy Waters*—done during the first season—and two special performances in January of the current year of *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, a production marred by inadequate rehearsal.

On the other hand, the experiments in realism have shown a wider range, including several plays poetic in content and others, purely realistic, that have forced the Little Theatre to attack this phase of the art-theatre problem from many angles. Beneath, there has also been a substratum, such as no theatre seems able to avoid, of negligible and, for the most part, worthless "pot-boilers."

Because of the experimental viewpoint at the Little Theatre, these productions in realistic drama have had more than a transient significance. Such plays as *Hedda Gabler*, *Rosmersholm*, *Anatol*, *Creditors*, *The Stronger*, *The Philanderer*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and others produced there—Gibson's *Womenkind*, Rupert Brooke's *Lithuania*, groups of realistic plays by Mary Aldis and by Mrs. Havelock Ellis—are written in a technique that is not consonant with what is distinctively characteristic of the art theatre. It is possible that, by some method yet undiscovered, this conflict may be partially eliminated; meanwhile,

there is only a frank acceptance of realism, or an experiment that will have its basis in compromise. In the Little Theatre this compromise has manifested itself in the acting, which without exception has been naturalistic.

The stagecraft, on the contrary, has varied from stylization to an approximate realism. The most radical example of the former was *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, where the stage decoration was stylized with subtle skill and unified through the four acts by an emphasis of repeated motifs. Yet this stylization divided the production into two parts—the acting and the *mise en scène*. A somewhat less radical stylization in *The Philanderer* was more effective, perhaps because the play is artificial comedy. In other productions unity by the use of a careful system of lighting has been attempted, but without real success, except in *Womenkind*, where advantage was taken of the opportunity afforded by artificial light in a cottage after sunset. This play was done with a realistic setting, over which the glow of lamp and candles and of the fireplace created a semblance of unity. With this one exception, realistic stage decoration, as in *Hedda Gabler* and *Rosmersholm*, or an almost entire absence of scenic investiture, has given the most harmonious results.

These productions have had, therefore, a negative significance. The art theatre, by simplification, by bringing a new imaginative quality into the method of production, has been of coöperative assistance, but it has as yet made no contribution of great constructive value to the staging of realistic drama.

Such, briefly, is the record of the best that has been accomplished by the Chicago Little Theatre in the first five years of its development. I have made no attempt to consider the numerous supplementary activities that have been closely a part of its work; nor have I spoken of the marionette theatre, thus far but an amusing divertisement for children.

The hampering of creative strength by poverty, by an immature method of organization, by many failures and blunders of insight, especially in regard to the players, has left even this accomplishment but a beginning. With three years of financial freedom and the knowledge gained through success and error, the Little Theatre will, in all probability, achieve that greater power which has awaited the opportunity. Meanwhile, neither in the Chicago Little Theatre nor elsewhere has the new art attained maturity; but as far as America is concerned, in the Little Theatre it has made its furthest progress.

How My Plays Should be Acted

By Paul Claudel

Translated by Barrett H. Clark

Editor's Note:—This little essay, wherein one of the foremost French poet-dramatists explains how he wishes the actors to present his plays, should prove of interest in the widespread discussion of what is wrong with American acting. The value of musical speech, especially, cannot be insisted upon too often in a country where unpoetic and slovenly use of the voice is almost as prevalent on the stage as in the street. Paul Claudel recently came to the attention of American drama-lovers through the publication of a translation of *The Tidings Brought to Mary*. The following article was published originally in *L'Œuvre*.

The actor is an artist and not a critic. His aim is not to interpret a text, but to impart life to a character. He ought therefore so to penetrate into the spirit and feeling of the rôle he assumes that his words on the stage shall seem no more than a form of natural expression. It is not a matter of *detail* and *shading*, equally and indifferently throughout the whole rôle; he must cling to each separate scene and attain to the very summits of expression which dominate all the rest.

Oftentimes what moves us the most in acting is not so much what the actor says as what we feel he is going to say. To know an intelligent man and to understand an artist and a creator are two very different things. It is only by a true evaluation of the relative importance of its component elements that a rôle is truly *composed*.

What is of greatest importance to me after the emotion, is the *music*. An agreeable voice, joined with clear enunciation and constituting part of an intelligible concert together with the other voices in the dialogue, is of itself a sufficient banquet for the soul, independently even of the abstract sense of the words. Poetry with its subtlety, its sound and accent, its images, its movement, is what allows the human voice its fullest range. My method of breaking up and dividing verses, based upon the necessity to breathe—that is, the illogical unifying of sentences which is none the less required from the point of view of emotion—in my opinion, helps the actor in his study of the rôle. If you listen carefully to someone speaking, you will notice that at a variable point towards the middle of the sentence his voice will rise, and then fall at the end. It is these two *tempi* and the intermediate modulations which go to make up one of my verses.

Because of the musical principle, I want nothing at first which is too violent, too sudden, too abrupt. You must not break that enchantment which binds the characters each to the other. It seems to me that there are ways of striking at the heart of the spectator, of obtaining sudden and biting impressions, without resorting to violence. Loud cries, for instance, will lose none of their effect if they are sparingly resorted to.

Likewise with acting and gestures—you must avoid all that is brusque, violent, artificial, and never lose a certain feeling for the group in which you appear, and the attitude you must assume. I have a peculiar horror of what is termed the "sequence of scenes": two long steps and a short, followed by a halt!—And no grimaces or convulsions. In moments of pathos, the tragic drawing out of a gesture is preferable to any sort of outburst. But even here you must guard against mannerism and affectation: rather, consult nature.

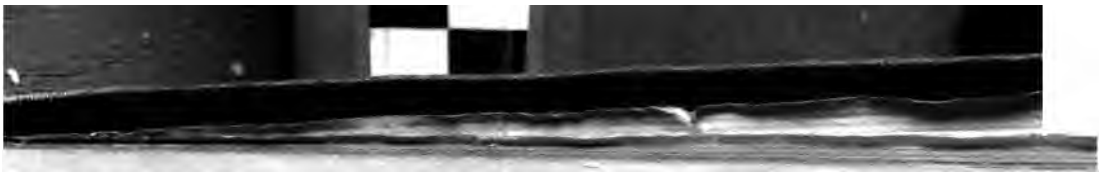
The principle of great art is scrupulously to avoid what is useless. The continual moving about of the actor who is constantly walking back and forth on the stage with evident intent to fill it, who rises and sits down, and turns about, is absolutely useless. Nothing annoys me more than the actor who depicts in his expression each detail of each emotion which the words of his partner on the stage produce upon him. Let him remain quiet, immobile if necessary, even if he be forced to appear a little stiff: the audience will at heart be grateful to him.

At each point of the play there is a corresponding attitude, and the gesture required should be only the composition and decomposition of that attitude.

These remarks are intended merely to make the actor reflect—for he knows his own profession—and not to hinder him, and make a marionette of him.

He must not act for the public: he must be capable of the disinterestedness of the great artist, and not concern himself with thoughts of success, but rather with the best possible realization of the art to which he should devote his life. And perhaps it is this very neglect of the audience which results in his ability to reach it and move it.

THE Litle Theatre Society of Indiana presented as the fifth bill of its season Rupert Brooke's *Lithuania*, a new adaptation of *The Maker of Dreams*, and *Suppressed Desires*. The final bill was made up of three Irish plays: *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Rising of the Moon*, and *Spreading the News*.



Sam Hume's Adaptable Settings

THERE are many reasons why the first season at the Arts and Crafts Playhouse in Detroit is likely to be long remembered by those interested in the insurgent movement in the American Theatre. Overshadowing all else, perhaps, is the achievement of presenting a series of plays of undoubted artistic merit, with professional finish, in a theatre so well managed that a surplus remains in the treasury to be carried over to another year. This combination of uniformly artistic standard with efficient business management stamps the playhouse as the first successful *normal* art theatre in the country.

But the most striking single achievement of the season has been the development of a new phase of stagecraft which seems destined to solve one of the most difficult problems in little theatre and art-theatre work. In providing a series of settings far finer in the aggregate than any group yet seen on an American stage, and at a cost far below even the little theatre average, Sam Hume has made a real contribution to the development of a typical art-theatre technique.

Those of us who have been more or less intimately connected with the project at Detroit realize that it is the genius of Sam Hume that has carried the Arts and Crafts Theatre to a position of leadership. But we recognize, too, that in providing him with a stage and equipment of an almost ideal sort, in granting freedom from interference, and in making possible a whole season of experiment in the same theatre, the Arts and Crafts Society brought to Mr. Hume an unusual opportunity. The production of a long and varied series of plays on one stage was the one thing needed to place him securely among the few real theatre artists in this country, and incidentally to make possible the concrete development of his ideas about an adaptable stage setting.

Sam Hume would be the first to give Gordon Craig credit both for inspiration toward a new art of the theatre, and for the principle of an interchangeable stage setting. He would also be quick to absolve Craig from responsibility for any defects which that perfection-seeking artist might find in the practical working-out of the idea. For the system as it now stands represents an independent solution of the problem.

Several books about the theatre have included photographs of Sam Hume's models for a poetic play, which he designed as

long ago as 1913.* These showed four or more square pillars, or pylons, rising out of sight behind the proscenium frame, long hanging curtains, stairs, and an impressionistic "tree-form" against a clear white back-wall. The designer amused himself and his friends by re-arranging these elements to provide proper atmosphere for such plays as might be suggested. He claimed that with a life-size equipment of the same sort, and without any of the usual painted drops, borders, etc., he could set adequately the scene for any poetic drama, or any scene for that increasing group of plays that demand atmospheric background rather than definite locality. At Detroit he has more than made good the claim.

Nineteen plays were produced during the season at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, in twenty scenes. The settings for eleven of these were merely variations of the permanent setting. The range covered such widely differing requirements as the interior of a mediæval château for "*The Intruder*," the Gates of Thalanna for "*The Tents of the Arabs*," the wall of Heaven for "*The Glittering Gate*," and a Spartan palace for "*Helena's Husband*."

The permanent setting at the Arts and Crafts Playhouse includes the following: four pylons, constructed of canvas on wooden frames, each of the three covered faces measuring two and one-half by eighteen feet; two canvas flats, each three by eighteen feet; two sections of stairs three feet long, and one section eight feet long, of uniform eighteen-inch height; three platforms of the same height, respectively six, eight and twelve feet long; dark green hangings as long as the pylons; two folding screens for masking, covered with the same cloth as used in the hangings, and as high as the pylons; and two irregular tree-forms in silhouette.

The pylons, flats, and stairs, and such added pieces as the arch and window, were painted in broken color, after the system introduced by Joseph Urban, so that the surfaces would take on any desired color under proper lighting.

The setting was seen in its simplest form in *The Wonder Hat* on the opening bill. The arrangement is indicated in the first diagram. The four pylons were set in pairs with the stairs between, with the curtains and screens used only to frame the picture at the sides. The two flats were laid on their sides to form the balustrade back of the platforms.

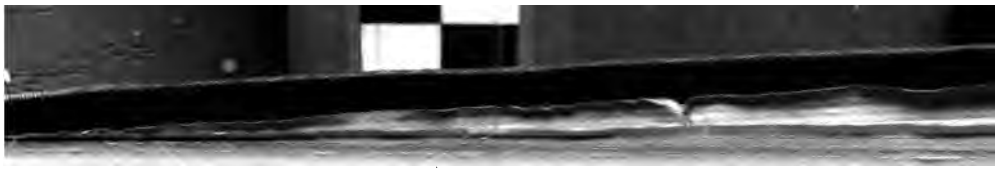
For *The Tents of the Arabs* the first important addition was made to the setting, in the form of an arch. The pylons, central stairs, platforms, hangings, screens and tree-forms were set exactly

* See *The Theatre of To-day*, *The New Movement in the Theatre*, or *How to Produce Amateur Plays*.

The permanent setting at the Arts and Crafts Theatre as arranged for Maeterlinck's *The Intruder*. Every structural piece used in this setting is seen again in that for *The Romance of the Rose*, shown on the third page following. Designed by Sam Hume. (Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.)

The upper picture shows the setting for *The Tents of the Arabs*, while the lower is that for *Helena's Husband*. Here Sam Hume has used exactly the same structural elements, the decorative curtain alone being added in the second set. The atmosphere, however, is entirely different. The *Tents of the Arabs* cut is used by courtesy of *The American Magazine of Art*. (Photographs by Frank Scott Clark.)

The permanent setting at the Arts and Crafts Theatre as arranged for the pantomime *The Romance of the Rose*. Designed by Sam Hume. (Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.)



as in *The Wonder Hat.* The only changes were the addition of the arch at the center and the closing of the outer openings between the pylons by means of the flats that had previously formed a balustrade. While the physical changes were few, the atmosphere of this setting was so entirely different that probably not a half dozen people in the audience realized that any of the same elements appeared in the two scenes. Incidentally, it was one of the simplest and most satisfying backgrounds seen during the season.

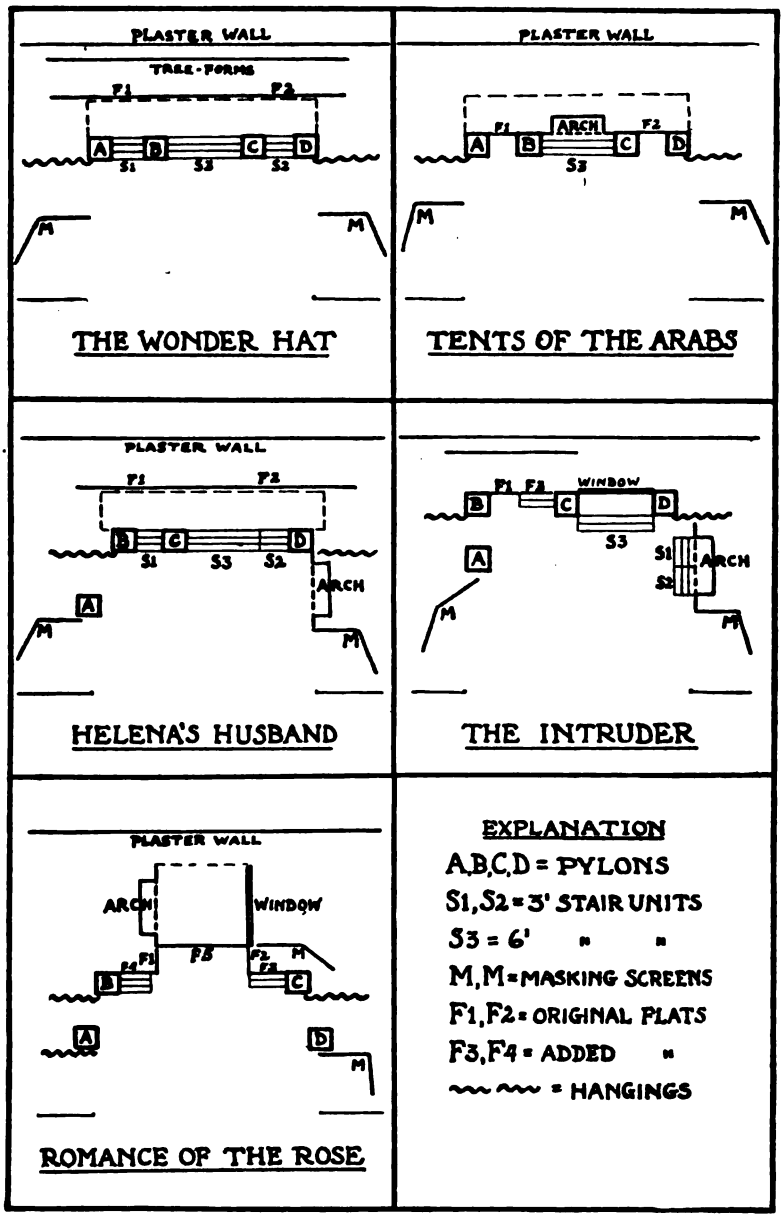
As seen on the stage, in color and under Hume's subtle lighting, the setting for *Helena's Husband* was the most beautiful of the series. Aside from the properties, there was nothing on the stage that had not already appeared in the scenes of *The Wonder Hat* and *The Tents of the Arabs* except two decorated curtains. Two pylons, two sections of stairs, the platforms and the balustrade appeared exactly as in *The Wonder Hat.* Only one pylon was used on the left side, thus leaving a wider opening for the balcony. The fourth pylon was brought down-stage right to suggest a corridor entrance. The arch and curtains formed a similar wall and entrance at the left. With the addition, then, of two decorative curtains and the two necessary properties, this remarkable atmospheric setting was evolved, merely by re-arranging elements already on hand—and elements, incidentally, which had long before paid their cost.

For the production of *Abraham and Isaac** the second important addition to the original setting was made, when a large Gothic window-piece was provided as an altar backing. The rest of the setting was made up of the green curtains, and two pylons with hanging decorations suggesting stained-glass windows.

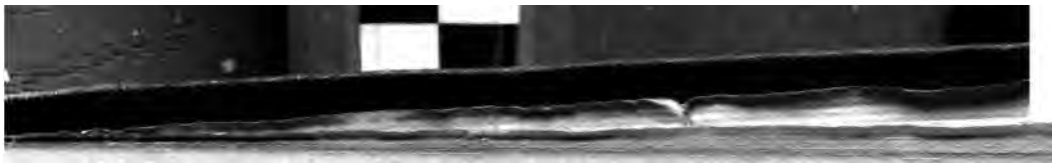
For Maeterlinck's *The Intruder*, which demanded a room in an old château, one important addition was made,—a flat with a door. At the left was the arch, then a pylon and curtain, and then the Gothic window, with practicable casements added. The rest of the back wall was made up of the new door-piece flanked by curtains, while the third wall consisted of two pylons and curtains. Stairs and platforms were utilized before the window and under the arch. A small two-stair unit was added, leading to the new door. This arrangement afforded exactly that suggestion of spaciousness and mystery for which the play calls. When the picture of this setting is placed beside that of any other in the whole series, it is difficult to see any duplication of elements—and yet practically every piece used in the earlier plays is there.

In the setting for *The Romance of the Rose*, a balcony on a

* See photograph in *Theatre Arts Magazine* for February.



Diagrams of five arrangements of the Permanent Setting at the Arts and Crafts Theatre.



street, a still more puzzling difference is to be noted. Here there are two new pieces,—a flat forming the front of the balcony, and a long flat with a niche for the Madonna figure. Temporary platforms also had to be constructed for the balcony floor. The pylons and hangings were used down-stage, to create the shadows of the dark street on either side. The two original flats and the arch and window, hardly seen by the audience, formed the walls of the sides of the balcony. On account of the cost of constructing the two new flats and the platforms this was one of the most expensive of the eleven variations of the permanent setting; but even here the entire outlay was less than twenty-five dollars.

Of the other plays *The Glittering Gate* was the only one demanding important changes. The four pylons were utilized for the wall of Heaven, and immense gates were swung between the central pair. The two acts of Molière's *A Doctor in Spite of Himself* were played before arrangements of the hangings, in the most daring of all Hume's experiments in simplification.

After the remarkable beauty and appropriateness of the series of settings, the most notable thing about them is their cheapness. Although the original equipment, as seen in *The Wonder Hat*, cost more, perhaps, than the average little theatre setting, it was far less expensive than the usual commercially designed set. And the particular point to be noted is that, once installed, changes and additions at very slight cost served to create effects which would have called for an outlay of several hundred dollars for each scene under the usual system. In the ten variations arranged after *The Wonder Hat* the total cost of added pieces averaged less than fifteen dollars for each scene. To our notoriously poor—though often notoriously extravagant—little theatres, such a solution of the scenic problem should be a Godsend.

The success of the system as worked out by Sam Hume is dependent upon several factors. First, of course, there is the physical necessity of a stage with a sky-dome or plaster background (a plain cyclorama drop is a passable substitute), and a flexible lighting equipment. In the second place, there must be a director who combines inventive ability with artistic taste. Nothing but this last requirement will prevent the adaptable setting idea from revolutionizing scenic work in the American stock theatres.

By no means all the possibilities of the idea have been worked out at Detroit. But enough has been accomplished to indicate that Sam Hume has brought to the American theatre the most important invention that has yet resulted from the revolution against the tradition-bound commercial theatre.

SHELDON CHENEY.

The Wisconsin Players

By Zona Gale

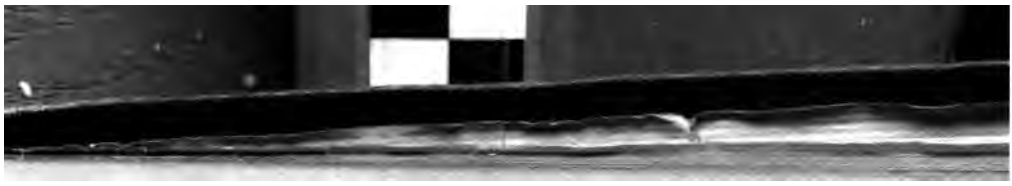
Whatever one may feel about the ultimate effect of democracy on art, democracy, when it comes, is going to have its art. This art is going to be what art has always been: the interpretation of truth. Every true interpretation of a thing serves as an intensification of that thing. The art of democracy will intensify democracy.

That is what is really being done by the new drama. For this drama on one hand is opening an area where all who participate in the arts of the theatre may find a laboratory in which to express themselves; and on the other hand, the new drama is developing an audience to keep pace with itself.

Far from being "high-brow," then, the new drama is inherently democratic. Any art, or any government which develops a love of its own standards is democratic. And any art which sets a standard and expects a public to live up, or live down, to that standard, or to go without, is autocratic. That is what the Broadway theatres have been doing for years. Only now are drama and the arts allied really beginning to express themselves for the public. And, by the same sign, to reveal what the theatre arts of the future will be.

One of the notable examples of these prophecies of the drama of to-morrow is in progress in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Players, now in their seventh year, are now first before the general public, because of their successful four-weeks' engagement at the Fine Arts Theatre in Chicago, where they had the unusual experience of receiving enthusiastic notice from every dramatic critic in Chicago. Following this engagement, they were invited to a tour by the Pond Lyceum Bureau, and under this management booked through the South; and they are to extend the tour to the Pacific Coast next season, if they so desire.

And yet their Chicago bill, and most of the plays given on the road, consisted not of foreign work, but of one-act plays written by members of the company, by Mrs. Sherry, their director, and by Middle-West men and women. These plays were *In a Vestibule*, *The Feast of the Holy Innocents*, and *A Perfect Home*, by Marshall Ilsley, of Milwaukee; *On the Pier*, *Romance*, and *The Mask*, by Laura Sherry, of Milwaukee, director of the Players; *Play*, by H. Austin Simms, of Milwaukee; and *Orange Blossom*, a Chinese play, by Philip Chynoweth, of Madison.



When they are at home, the Wisconsin Players find themselves in a charming old English basement-house downtown in Milwaukee, with four floors for activities. On the top floor is the little theatre, seating eighty, and here, in addition to the plays done by the members of the society, have been played translations from the French, German, Russian, Italian, Swedish and Norwegian, with English, Irish and Scottish plays. This room is the usual laboratory center of the new theatre movement. Not only are the pieces produced by members of the society, but the portable stage settings are painted by them, the costumes are designed and executed by them, and the posters of announcement are painted by the members. Here, for one evening a week, comes someone from outside to lecture on the present moment in drama, poetry, music, prose, or plastic art. Weekly classes assemble for instruction in æsthetic dancing, and the hall is open all the time for practice and rehearsal.

On the third floor is the Playhouse Book Shop, an attractive room with an open fire, tables for children, and shelves of books on drama, poetry, philosophy and sociology. Below are the two drawing rooms, where chamber-music concerts are given. And in the basement is the Playhouse Tea Shop, charmingly decorated in the new manner by artists among the members of the organization. Drama reading circles and a play-writing department are allied with the Players.

In order not to neglect the possibilities of the larger theatre, each year the society gives one or two performances in one of the large Milwaukee theatres. The last production was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, given with exquisite interpretation of color and lighting and dancing, with ballets which were a part of the piece, and interrupted nothing — ballets in which Titania's train came in lovely color dancing down rays of strong light, from fairy woods as we dream fairy woods to be. Another of the notable large theatre productions was *The Marriage of Sobeide*, a Persian play, translated from the German by one of the society's members, and produced with accessories of lighting and hangings and cyclorama, but with almost no properties.

Incidentally, the Players reach out into the municipality, lending settings and costumes for high school and college productions, announcing competitions for their own productions, and offering a place where the precious talent wasted in most communities may at least have a chance of expression and hearing. The membership of the Players is in all branches of society.

The founder and spirit of the whole is Laura Sherry, one of the group of discriminating producers of drama in this country. Herself a playwright and poet, formerly a member of Richard Mansfield's company, and director of the beautiful Milwaukee Pageant, she has put into this work her practical gifts, as well as her vision. She manages the playhouse, produces the plays, writes some of them and often takes the principal woman's rôle.

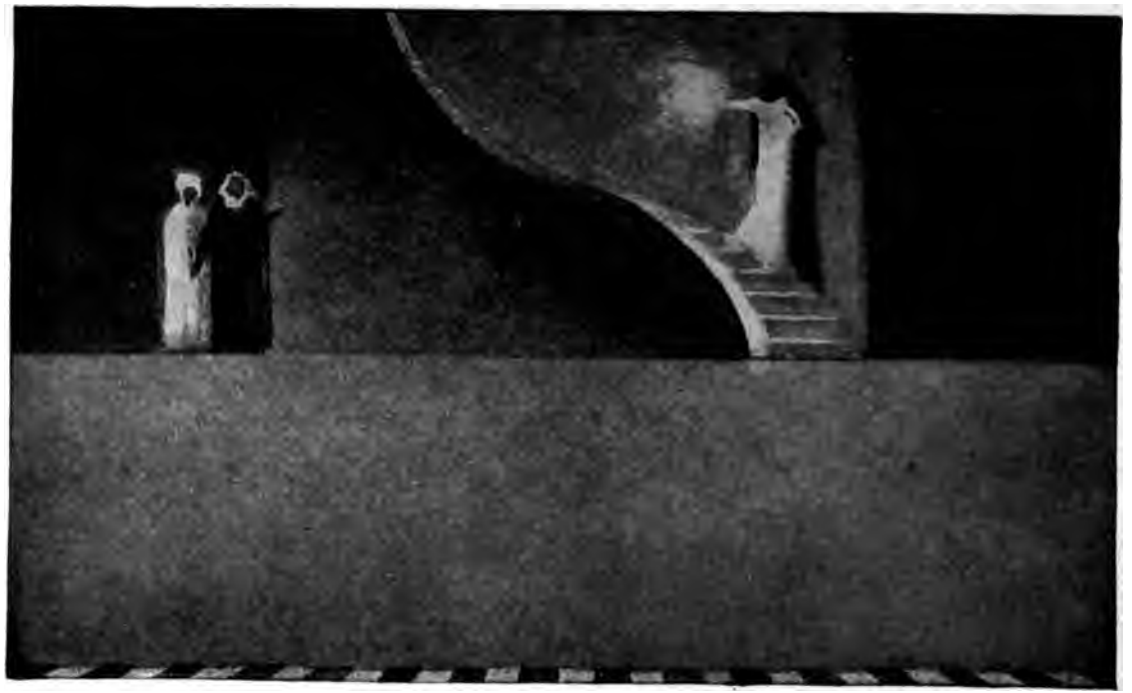
On Stylization

THE term "stylization" occurs more and more frequently in books and essays about the theatre, but no definition has yet been invented that covers the exact meaning of the word. The reason is that stylization concerns that indefinable process by which an artist reveals in his creative work the quality of his individual artistic vision.

Stylization in the theatre corresponds to "style" in literary work, or "interpretation" in music. It is the stamp of the personality of the artist-director, his particular manner of producing the play as distinguished from the manner of any other director.

As used in America the term has usually been limited to descriptions of settings. That is an unwarranted and unfortunate restriction of the word. Stylization properly suggests a unity, an all-embracing mood or tone, which runs through every department of the director's work, binding play, acting and staging in one atmosphere, and serving to give one impression. In this sense stylization is the distinguishing quality by which true art-theatre production may be distinguished from the average commercial theatre or amateur production. It is the measure of the artistic vision with which the producer has grasped the inner meaning of the play and reflected it in the acting, lighting and setting.

Unfortunately the quality of a stylized play passes with the performance, except such part as may be caught by the camera lens in the settings and grouping. An excellent example of this phase of stylization is illustrated in the plate facing this page. We publish this not so much because it is uniquely beautiful pictorially as because it shows how one director picked up the mood of stateliness, utter simplicity and almost starkness, struck by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, and carried it into the various elements of his production, including the setting. It illustrates the sort of stylization that makes dramatic fitness its foundation principle.



Sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth* as designed by Knut Ström and Rochus Gliese for a production at the Tempelhof, Berlin. (See note on stylization on page opposite.) From H. K. Moderwell's "The Theatre of To-day," by courtesy of John Lane Company.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Editorial Comment

Jacques Copeau

THERE are few places in picturedom where one can find a more depressing exhibition of bad taste than in the files of French dramatic journals. When art falls below a certain level of mediocrity, the extent of its badness can be measured only by its pretentiousness. And French staging, in a period when bad dramatic art was almost universal, became the most pretentious in the world.

A perusal of the volumes of *Le Théâtre*, for four or five years preceding the war, recently confirmed the impression. But occasionally there turned up a picture that showed rare understanding of the principles of appropriate and reticent stage setting. Sometimes the rare exception would be labelled as coming from the *Théâtre des Arts*, or from the *Théâtre Antoine*. But at the end it most often bore the name of the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier*.

The French Theatre in New York has been a reflection of the worst to be found on the Parisian stage—sophisticated, tawdry, artificial. A visit to the theatre last winter revealed a discouraging reversion to nineteenth-century standards: the acting was crassly artificial, palpably aimed at the audience, and generally without the distinction which once half redeemed such exhibitions; and the settings were so bad that even the second-rate American manager would hesitate to use them—which, God knows, is sinking pretty low.

The change in the French Theatre has come as suddenly and completely as a Russian revolution. The governing board has chosen for director the one man best fitted to build a sane new theatre over the ruins of the old—Jacques Copeau, founder and director of the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* in Paris. Copeau was as much a leader of the progressive theatre in France as was Max Reinhardt in Germany, or Granville Barker in England; and if he was less advertised, he was at least more thoughtful, more thorough, and more willing to build slowly and consolidate the progress as he went. Jacques Copeau belongs rather to that little group of artist-thinkers who have been the explorers and quiet pioneers in the progressive movement. He stands with Gordon Craig, Adolphe Appia and Constantin Stanislavsky as a student-worker and inspirational leader in the new movement.

The impetus toward a new art of the theatre in America has been derived largely from Germany and Austria, although its sources may go back to Craig

and Appia, or, in a less closely related phase, to Shaw and Ibsen. If, then, Jacques Copeau in his new position accomplishes all that we hope for, we shall see the phenomenon of a French Theatre becoming the first true art theatre in New York. It is simply one more proof that great art is international and universal, that it is broader and more just than patriotism, commerce, and those other things about which millions of men have lost their heads and are killing each other.

Jacques Copeau's presence in New York is a sign of the times — both dramatically and politically — and the best sign we know.

About the Portmanteau Theatre

IT IS seldom that we trouble to answer our critics. But in a long letter from Stuart Walker, protesting against "the scant notice we take of his work," certain matters are brought up which in the answering may serve to make clearer our attitude toward the several progressive theatres.

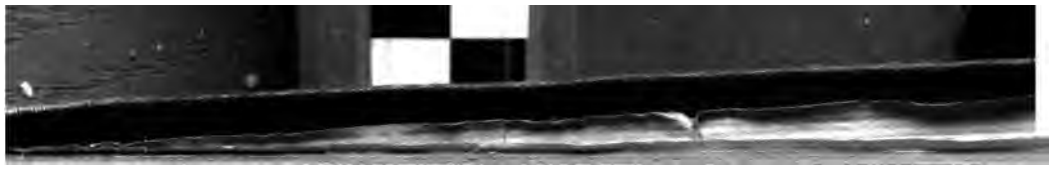
We have no intention of modifying our private or published opinion of the Portmanteau Players. In the article in question we gave Mr. Walker credit and thanks for bringing novel enjoyment into the theatre through a repertory of poetic and fantastic plays; and we criticized his organization for not getting the full poetic beauty out of those plays, and for an imperfect realization of the ideals of the new stagecraft. That still expresses our view in the main, stripped of all qualifying phrases.

The point we wished to suggest was this: The Portmanteau Players, working with typical "art-theatre" material, but failing to derive the full poetic and artistic value from that material, challenged comparison with the commercial theatres on Broadway. Any such imperfect expression of the progressive spirit, when masquerading in the name of the new drama, can only hurt the whole cause of a better art of the theatre. And the display of such near-art productions as certain of those we saw on the Portmanteau stage seems likely to delay rather than hasten a general acceptance of the new ideals.

Stuart Walker asks that we explain to our readers more fully our two criticisms,—of his settings and of his company's acting.

We believe that a setting should be an integral part of the whole production, a reinforcement of the mood, story, or impression which the original poet visualized and wished to convey to his audience. We do not believe that the play's the thing, or that the acting is the all-important element, and certainly not that stage decoration is most important. The whole production as seen and heard is to be considered; and until there is the proper combination of vital play, distinguished acting, and beautiful and appropriate staging, there cannot be a full and complete expression of the art of the theatre.

The setting must be instinct with that beauty which illumines the play — and all will agree that Mr. Walker has chosen several dramas in which an inner beauty, a dramatic rhythm, is easily discovered. And yet the settings for Dunsany's plays as we saw them on the Portmanteau stage seemed inadequate to their purpose. They not only failed to add to the impression or mood, but they seemed like a rather unintelligent attempt to copy the decorative work of Robert Edmond Jones or some of the German stage artists. They had simplicity; but mere simplicity means nothing if not reinforced by taste. They displayed the typical tendency toward big spaces and raw color; but they showed absolutely no feeling for the subtler adjustments of



design and color. In short, the Portmanteau settings copied certain of the exterior forms of the new stagecraft, but lost entirely the inner feeling and spirit of it.

Our criticism of the acting of the Portmanteau Players was perhaps due, as Mr. Walker suggests, to a preconceived notion of the way in which Dunsany's plays should be presented. We regard Dunsany as a *poetic* dramatist above all else. While the purely dramatic quality of his work was fully brought out in the Portmanteau productions, the poetry absolutely failed to register. Such a production is but a half realization of the potential beauty that lies hidden in the poetic text.

We do not at all defend the sort of poetic ornament that interferes with the unfolding of dramatic action. But, in a true poetic drama, the musical quality of the lines can be brought out, not as a counter attraction to, or as a lull from, the action, but as a reinforcement of the structural beauty of the play. Mr. Walker's actors seemed not to realize that there is such a thing as poetry of speech.

The reaction from the old ranting method has brought the commercial stage to a dead level of prosaic and slovenly speech. If a production does not rise above that level, it has no claim to consideration according to art-theatre standards. To understand the poetry, to bring out its full flavor by proper rhythm and inflection—this can be done without the affectation, the artificiality and the trickery of an outworn system. It was when we first saw a Dunsany play acted—not by the Portmanteau Players—that we came to realize what a precious heritage has been lost through the debasement of the actor's art. We want companies capable of restoring that art.

Much as we have admired Mr. Walker's inventive ability and his willingness to innovate, we feel that criticism at this point in his career is just, and at the same time good for him. His first season was an achievement of undoubted value. This year his organization has not made the artistic progress it should. Next year should tell whether it is to become a mere cog in the commercial system, content with a commercial success, or be a real factor in the development of art theatres in this country. Mr. Walker's evident satisfaction with what he has done made us doubt for the moment that he had the artistic vision necessary to unify a dramatic production by beautifying all its parts. Only when he shows that he can grasp the essential rhythm of the play, and carry it through both acting and staging, will he merit the unqualified praise which he has practically asked us to give him.

We have said more than we intended. We close with every good wish for the success of the Portmanteau Players, so long as they work in the realm of art.

The Theatre Workshop

WE HAVE been watching with interest the growth in New York of an institution called "The Theatre Workshop." For nearly a year Grace Griswold has been giving her time and effort to develop an agency to "centralize the various creative interests in the theatre," and she seems to have made real progress in the effort to bring together the best out of the commercial theatre and the best out of the amateur field.

Of course the project is largely experimental as yet. But there are indications which point to the wisdom of the founders and the ultimate success of their aims. We like, for instance, the fact that when they organized their

players there was no blare of trumpets and no announcement that a real art theatre had sprung Minerva-like from their collective brains. The company appears as "The Associate Players, an introductory group to the Regular Players."

We like, too, their courage in choosing plays as radically removed from commercial standards as Browning's *In a Balcony* and Dunsany's *The Tents of the Arabs*. There is appreciation of poetic values there—and the American stage stands in dire need of poetry!

But we like most of all their clear understanding of the audience question. Instead of saying that the public wants a medley of sentiment, bare legs, knockdown farce and "punch," they recognize that most people prefer great drama *if* adequately presented. Witness this from the Workshop announcement: "The great public has ceased to regard the theatre as a Fine Art or to be interested in great dramatic literature. The reason is not far to seek. Great literature demands *great interpretation*, just as great music does. There is a public for symphony and opera, but only when finely rendered. The same is true of drama."

And so, Grace Griswold, here's wishing you and your Workshop all success.

Good News from Chicago

FEW bits of news that have come to us of late have been more encouraging than that telling of the endowment of the Chicago Little Theatre for a three-year period. No other organization has had to contend with so many difficulties in the pioneer days of the revolutionary movement. And certainly no other has come so near to developing a real art-theatre technique in this country. Now that it is partially freed from the burden which has hampered it at every turn, it should achieve even greater success. Its one greatest fault in the past has been instability, a failure to link up as an integral part of its community life. Now the community itself has secured to the theatre the means of continuing its work with a new freedom. We extend our hearty congratulations to Maurice Browne and his co-workers—and to Chicago.

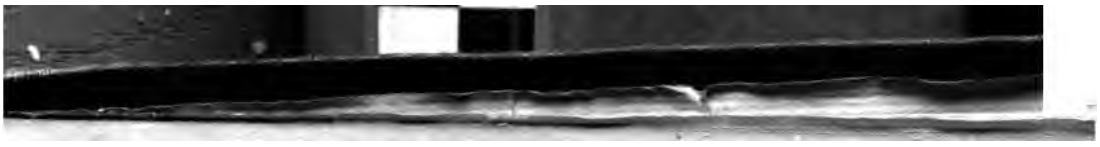
The Mask Again

THE havoc that war works with art has been brought to mind occasionally when we thought of the Arena Goldoni in Florence, and of Gordon Craig's School for the Art of the Theatre. All work there stopped soon after the first guns were fired, and *The Mask*, Gordon Craig's stimulating magazine, ceased publication. We have heard from Craig occasionally, in letters full of hope, energy, and desire to be back at actual theatre work, and—as is the case with all his writings—full of the creative urge. Now at last comes the good news that *The Mask* will resume publication immediately, not from Florence but from Rome. It is easily the most important theatre publication in the world, and its return to the land of the living is a matter of vital import in the struggle "towards a new theatre."

WE regret that the article on "Plays for Little Theatres," promised in our last issue, was crowded out of this number at the last minute, although already set in type. It will appear in the August issue.

Setting by Morton L. Schamberg for *Three Women* as produced by the Philadelphia Stage Society. This is an attempt to represent on the stage, in the familiar Cubist style, the city of Seville.

Scene from *Simon the Cyrenian* as produced in New York by the Colored Players. Setting by Robert Edmond Jones. (Photograph by Maurice Goldberg.)



The Colored Players and Their Plays

THE production of Ridgely Torrence's three plays in April at the Garden and Garrick Theatres in New York was significant in three ways. First, these were plays about negroes and acted by negro players; second, they were the work of three important artists—Mr. Torrence himself, whose lyrical and dramatic poetry has already made him a permanent place in English literature, Mrs. Emilie Hapgood, producer of Galsworthy's *Justice* and Chesterton's *Magic*, and Robert Edmond Jones, creator of some of the most beautiful settings of the English stage; and, most important, these plays are significant because they promise a really new field for American drama, and this in a day when its fields, seldom really tilled, have yet been sadly overrun.

The Colored Players opened at the Garden, were transferred to the Garrick, and will be given several special performances before they are returned to the stage next season, and taken to Chicago and Boston.

To do for the negro theatrically what has been done for the Irish by the Irish Theatre movement is magnificently worth while. This is to interpret to the public—and perhaps to itself—a race never yet understood, in a land which is not of its own choosing. But, in addition, there promises to develop a new medium for artistic expression, with new graces, new freedom, an atmosphere indefinably other. We look into hearts where we are not accustomed to look. We find there dignities and withdrawals and a something walled in beyond the power of any ruling race to dominate. Those who have best understood the negro and have seen his potentiality for to-morrow have hardly ever read his present as it is to be read in these simple presentations of something of what he is.

It is vital to understand that these plays are no imitation of the drama of the white race. Neither are they the pseudo-delineation which the American dramatist has too often offered as interpreting a type-negro, New England, Middle West, Bowery. Here is no pretense, no burlesque, no forced note, no sacrificing to humor. Here is a race, infinitely potential, moving before one in individuals highly differentiated, and as terribly intent—you see it now at last—on their own living as any Anglo-Saxon is intent on his own. The Colored Players strike at a provincialism which has been in one's way, it appears, not only socially, but artistically. For where else is revealed their richness

of voice, this flow of rhythm, this plastic posing, and above all this treasure of emotional power?

Of the three plays, two are modern. And they both make one gasp—as does the revelation, say, about "some disturbance of the Indians by drunken whites." For here is Granny Maumee, reveling in her lineage of the "royal black," and struck to horror and despair by the treachery of her daughter, whose child has white blood. The torrent of phrases, combining the Christian terminology with the voodoo, is marvelously contrived to body forth the old creature, whose son has been burned by a mob and who is living her life for the purification of her race. And once more, in *The Rider of Dreams*, there is Madison Sparrow, led into temptation and put upon by the white men, with their get-rich-quick schemes and their brick and mortar, and from these white men he is warned to keep clear. One is not accustomed to see either one's race or one's nation regarded impersonally. Only other races, other nations.

Then there is Simon of Cyrene, cross-bearer for the Christ, and according to the early artists, an African. It is here that Robert Jones has brought his freedoms and his bestowals, in a setting of awful simplicity of white line and white space, and skilful use of level. And how the figures move! Procula, the wife of Pilate, the attendants, the litter-bearers, the lithe Ethiopians, the slaves. Beautiful skin, set off by costumes designed to stress that beauty and the movement, costumes such as we, who do not know Ethiopia, have never seen these people wear—loose, flowing, freedom-giving, accenting every grace.

The cast was selected from colored people all over New York, a few acting in stock companies, but most of them untouched by the crudities of the burlesque written for them. The players came now to be themselves. Intonation, business, interpretation, were never given to the players first—merely modified as the work progressed. The effect was unforgetable, prophetic.

The Colored Players and these plays are like a gesture or a window. Beyond is a prospect. Ridgely Torrence believes that it holds a way for art to take and a people to move. If this is so, the service which he has done, both to this art and to these people, is one which is done only by a great artist in a great cause.

ZONA GALE.

The inn of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Joseph Urban has given here a hint of the village bridge, which could be glimpsed in every scene of the production, and has centered the attention on Falstaff sitting on his guzzling throne. Compare this with frontispiece plate.

The sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth* as designed by Joseph Urban for James K. Hackett's production in New York. Lady Macbeth entered at the right, crossing the moonlit parapet and descending the steps to speak her famous lines in the darkness below.

News of Theatre Art and Artists

The Washington Square Players presented their fourth bill of the season in March, as follows: *Plots and Playwrights* by Edward Massey, *The Poor Fool* by Hermann Bahr, and Molière's *Sganarelle*. On May 7th Ibsen's *Ghosts* was presented as the last production of the season, and proved so popular that the run was extended twice. A bill of revivals was scheduled to open the summer season, consisting of Edward Massey's *Plots and Playwrights*, Lawrence Langner's *Another Way Out*, and Strindberg's *Pariah*.

An interesting historical revival took place in Boston on April 5th and 7th when students of the New England Conservatory of Music, under the direction of Clayton D. Gilbert, produced *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler, called "the first American comedy." The stage settings were designed by Frank Chouteau Brown.

The St. Louis Art League, an organization which fosters creative effort in all the arts, has offered three prizes aggregating $175.00 for the best one act plays written by residents of St. Louis. The competition will close on September 1st, and the prize-winning play will probably be produced at the Artists' Guild Theatre in the fall.

At the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit an extensive exhibition of designs for stage settings and costumes was opened in May. The most important groups of drawings were those by J. Blanding Sloan, Raymond Johnson, and Joseph Urban, with smaller groups by Robert Edmond Jones, Alexander Pope, members of the Washington Square Players' staff, and others. The most striking costume exhibits were those by Ilonka Karasz and Martha Ryther.

At the Folsom Galleries in New York, John Wenger held during February and March an exhibition of his drawings, paintings, and stage settings. Mr. Wenger will be on the staff of the Greenwich Village Players when they open their theatre in the fall.

By arrangement with the Symphony Society of New York, Margaret Anglin will present there next season the series of Greek plays which she recently staged so successfully at the Greek Theatre in Berkeley. Walter Damrosch, who had charge of the orchestral work for the productions on the coast, will be associated with Miss Anglin as Musical Director in New York.

Joseph Urban and Richard Ordynski took over the Bandbox Theatre in New York and presented in March *Nju*, a modern Russian play by Ossip Dymow. The critics disagreed over the value of the offering, and the play was withdrawn through lack of public support.

During May the Brooklyn Museum held an exhibition illustrating "the scenic art of the theatre." The exhibits were drawn largely from the commercial studios of New York, but such progressive designers as Rollo Peters, Lee Simonson, Edmund Dulac, and John Wenger were also represented.

At the Little Theatres

The Players Workshop in Chicago presented in March *Rumor* by Frederick Bruegger, *Out of the Dark* by Donovan Yeuell, *Tonsils* by Marie L. Marsh, and *No Sabe* by Elisha Cook. The April bill was *The Myth of the Mirror*, adapted by Gretchen Riggs, *Banbury Cross* by Frederick Bruegger, *Beyond* by Alice Gerstenberg, and *Where but in America?* by Oscar M. Wolff. For its May offering, marking the first anniversary of the founding of the theatre, a review bill was announced.

The Prairie Playhouse at Galesburg presented, early in March, *The March of Truth* by Katherine Searle, *America Passes By* by Kenneth Andrews, and *The Lower Road* by Charles C. Mather. Later in the month A. H. Gilmer's *The Edge of the World* was revived. The two bills announced for the remainder of the season were cancelled because Director J. A. Crafton and several members of the company were called into army service.

New York will have another little theatre organization with a home of its own when the Greenwich Village Theatre opens in the fall. A building with a seating capacity of 450, and with a stage modernly equipped, is now under construction. Frank Conroy, formerly with the Washington Square Players, will be director of the new playhouse.

The Provincetown Players produced at their laboratory theatre in New York in March *The Prodigal Son* by Harry Kemp, *Cocaine* by Pendleton King, and *The People* by Susan Glaspell. The season closed with a review bill, including *Cocaine*, *The People*, Rita Wellman's *Barbarians*, and *Suppressed Desires* by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook. During the summer the organization will continue its work at its Wharf Theatre in Provincetown, trying out plays to be presented next year in New York, and experimenting in new directions.

The East-West Players, a New York organization devoted to the production of Yiddish drama in English, in April presented *At the Threshold* by Perez Hirschbein, *The Dollar* by David Pinski, *She Must Marry a Doctor* by Sholom Aleichem, and *Night* by Sholom Asch. Public interest in the production was so great that the same bill was presented in May.

At South Bend, Indiana, a playhouse called "Our Little Theatre," seating 150, has been built in connection with the High School. Under the direction of Miss Gena Thompson an interesting experiment is being made in substituting laboratory work in theatre production for the usual courses in "Dramatics."

The Arts and Crafts Playhouse in Detroit presented in March *Helena's Husband* by Philip Moeller, *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, *The Glittering Gate* by Lord Dunsany, and *The Lost Silk Hat* by Lord Dunsany. The April bill was as follows: *Lonesomelike* by Harold Brighouse, *The Intruder* by Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Last Man In* by W. B. Maxwell, and *Suppressed Desires* by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell. The May bill, which closed the season, included *The Constant Lover* by St. John Hankin, *The Romance of the Rose*, a pantomime by Sam Hume, and Molière's *A Doctor in Spite of Himself*. During the season of 1917-18 a series of six productions will be given. Sam Hume has been retained as director for the coming year.

A new little theatre was opened in February on the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Goodrich at West Orange, New Jersey. The auditorium is attractively decorated, and the stage equipment is modern, including a "sky-dome." The theatre was opened with a masque, written and staged by Howard Greenley, and acted by the Blythlea Players, a local organization.

The Ypsilanti Players, who have at Ypsilanti, Michigan, a playhouse of tiny dimensions, seating only 52 spectators, presented as their last bill of the season *The Glittering Gate* by Lord Dunsany, *Helena's Husband* by Philip Moeller and *Suppressed Desires* by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook.

The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York presented in May the following plays: *The People* by Susan Glaspell, *A Sunny Morning* from the Spanish of the Quinteros, and *A Night at an Inn* by Lord Dunsany. This bill proved so popular that it will be revived in June as the last production of the season.

The Community Players, who have established an experimental theatre at Richmond Hill, Long Island, presented in May their fourth bill of the season. The feature of the program was Percival Wilde's *According to Darwin*, staged by the author.

The Art Drama Players, who have been seen in occasional performances during several seasons, have established "The Brooklyn Repertory Theatre." The organization presented on April 13th *The Household Gods* by Violet Robinson, *The Rising of the Moon* by Lady Gregory, and *The Subjection of Kezia* by Mrs. Havelock Ellis. On April 20th Bernard Shaw's *Candida* was presented.

The New Published Plays

FIVE RUSSIAN PLAYS, WITH ONE FROM THE UKRAINIAN, translated by C. E. Bechhofer. This volume is worth having if only because it contains Nicholas Evreinov's *A Merry Death*, the imaginative, sometimes puzzling and often cynical Harlequinade which has already been seen in several American theatres. A second Evreinov play, *The Beautiful Despot*, is likewise stimulating and original, and it follows the author's philosophy that "nothing in life is worth taking seriously," at the same time affording remarkable flashes of insight into the most serious matters of life. After these two the others in the volume seem like mere fillers: two thin farces, *The Choice of a Tutor* by Denis Von Vizin, and *The Wedding* by Chekov; *The Jubilee*, an unpleasant bit by Chekov, that just misses being a powerful tragedy; and *The Babylonian Captivity*, a serious but undramatic biblical sketch by Lesya Ukrainka. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $1.25.)

MOGU THE WANDERER, by Padraic Colum, is a Persian story-play, with the rich atmosphere of the East about it. Reading it is like spending an hour with a volume of Oriental tales; to stage it acceptably one would have to set the loosely constructed story in gorgeous settings and costumes, with a background of the pageantry of the East, after the manner of the famous *Kismet*. The dialogue, in mixed verse and prose, is sustained at a high poetic level, with occasional flights worthy of the masterly Dunsany. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.00.)

MASTERPIECES OF MODERN SPANISH DRAMA, edited by Barrett H. Clark, contains, besides Mr. Clark's brief preface and notes, three important plays. *The Great Galeoto* by Echegaray is perhaps the only one that deserves the title of masterpiece in the world sense. This tragic study of the evil effects of gossip is so fine that it must surely find adequate interpretation on the American stage sooner or later. *The Duchess of San Quentin* by Galdos, while intensely interesting, is more obvious, and is peopled largely with type characters. It is in effect a psychological melodrama, although it avoids melodramatic violence of action. In *Daniela* Angel Guimera treats originally and vividly the old theme of the woman who has gone the Parisian pace, returning to her small-town home with varying reactions on her one-time neighbors and friends. All three plays achieve something of the wide sweep and directness that are typical of all phases of Spanish art at its best. The three translations, by different hands, are all good. The volume is a real contribution to the growing library of European drama. (New York: Duffield and Company. $2.00.)

YZDRA, by Louis V. Ledoux, is a closet drama of more than average merit. The tragic story is serviceable in holding the reader's interest, and the blank verse is graceful, if uninspired. Occasional lines are so felicitous as to warrant a second reading. But the play could not be staged; and after all, the form is one that has served its usefulness. In short, it is a pretty example of an outworn type of drama. (New York: The Macmillian Company. $1.25)

FIVE PLAYS by George Fitzmaurice is a volume of Irish folk-dramas. The two long plays, *The Country Dressmaker* and *The Moonlighter*, make uncommonly good reading. They are characterized by raciness of speech, imagination and interesting plot. But all the pieces are stories rather than

plays—with many characters, talky, and diffuse action. It is an excellent book of library drama. Reading it will not help to promote sympathy between us and one of our whited allies. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

THE ARISTOCRAT, by Louis N. Parker, is a dramatization of the fall of a decadent but proud nobility before a rude but democratic rabble at the time of the French Revolution. The figures are marshaled before a wide historical background, with the sweeping technique for which the author is famous; and the dialogue is written with his usual grace and facility. It is not a great play, and it more than once stoops to obvious stage trickery; but is is clever and stirring, and worth reading as one would read an absorbing novel. (New York: John Lane Company. $1.00.)

THE GAMBLERS, THE THIRD DEGREE, MAGGIE PEPPER, and THE LION AND THE MOUSE, all by Charles Klein. These four plays long ago made their respective hits when produced on Broadway, and have been stock favorites ever since; and to review their subject-matter would be superfluous. Without literary merit, they still are worth having in published form, if only as examples of the American counterpart of the French well-made play. They are typically "of the theatre," sure-fire, full of stage tricks; and yet they form a fairly accurate repertorial reflection of slangy American life. The lover of literary drama will find them negligible, but the student of the stage will find them invaluable for reference. Indeed, no comprehensive dramatic library is complete without them. (New York: Samuel French. Each 50c.)

New Books About the Theatre

THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ENGLAND, by Thomas H. Dickinson. This is the best historical work that has yet appeared dealing with recent phases of dramatic art in England. It covers the period from early Victorian days to the beginning of the present war, ending with the effect of Gordon Craig's theories on the English theatre. It is exceptionally well written, and while we do not accept all the author's judgments, we must agree that he has reasoned well and that he has based his opinions on a remarkably comprehensive knowledge of the field. He usually judges, moreover, from the progressive standpoint. The only chapters that become at all tiresome are those in which he takes up the works of Jones, Pinero and Shaw one by one. There are few historical treatises that show so little of didacticism, and we mark the book as one worth owning. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

THE MIRROR OF GESTURE, translated from the Indian by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Gopala Kristnayya Duggirala. This treatise is practically a set of rules for the guidance of actors in depicting various emotions and ideas. The proper movements of the hands, features, body, limbs, etc., are minutely described. The translated material is of little direct value except to the actor-student; but it makes clear that Eastern acting is a thing of design and conscious discipline, absolutely free from impulse and chance—and so a matter to be studied and imitated by Western actors. The most interesting part of the book for the average reader is the translator's introduction. In ten pages he brings up point after point that will prove suggestive and stimulating to those who are groping after the truth about the art of the theatre. The necessity of bringing out all the values of the action instead of parading the actor's personality, the value of poetic as against prosaic acting, and the need of self-forgetfulness in the artist—these and other wholesome truths are emphasized. The book should be in every reference library; and every serious student of theatre art should have his copy. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. $1.50.)

THE ENGLISH DRAMA IN THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE, by William Creizenach. This translation from the German opens to English readers a scholarly and encyclopædic treatise on the English theatre of the Elizabethan period. The work avoids the historical-biographical method, and is less a running account of the development and flowing of English drama, than an analysis of dramatic art at its most important moment. The chapter headings include such subdivisions as "The Vocation and Position of the Dramatist," "Moral and Social Ideas of the Dramatists," "Types of Character," "Versification and Style," and "Staging and Histrionic Art." From the point of view of the artist in the theatre the book suffers from those limitations which are characteristic of most historical and didactic treatises. But it is the best volume of its kind, and is, of course, indispensable to the public library and the collector of serious works in the field of dramatic history. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. $4.50.)

DUNSANY THE DRAMATIST, by Edward Hale Bierstadt. It is a sign of the times that a living poet-dramatist is here accorded the honor of an entire book about his work. Two years ago it would have been impossible; but to-day those whose business it is to forecast public appreciation, writer and publisher alike, consider Dunsany a "find." Here we have him and his work treated in readable fashion. It goes almost without saying that any fairly well-written account of the most-talked-of dramatist would be interesting, and similarly that every student of contemporary drama must have the volume. It shows signs of hurried writing, the hasty portions becoming the more noticeable by contrast with extremely well-written passages. And the author's suggestions as to how certain of the Dunsany plays might be done better (according to current "rules" of playwriting) are often tiresome — if not an impertinence. But on the whole it is a sympathetic, temperately considered essay, and a contribution to the literature of the new drama. Letters from Dunsany, printed in an appendix, add to the book's value. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.50.)

BERNARD SHAW: THE MAN AND THE MASK, by Richard Burton. This short critical and biographic treatise is a sort of Chautauqua hand-book introduction to the work of the great dramatist-thinker. It follows the usual academic predigesting method, and never goes below the depth of the average reader. Its virtues are a graceful style, completeness as an analytical record of Shaw's plays to date, and a "popular" method of interpretation. On the other hand, the author betrays himself as an elementary social thinker, and is at best amusing when he condescends to put Shaw right on social theories. The chapter in which he tries to prove Shaw a master of dramatic technique is feeble and unconvincing. An excellent book for beginners, women's clubs and drama leagues, and not bad for others. (New York: Holt & Co. $1.60.)

SIR SIDNEY LEE'S NEW EDITION OF A LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SOME WORDS OF CRITICISM, by Sir George Greenwood, M.P. The author of this little volume is not only a Shakespearean scholar of the split-hair variety, but a lawyer with a profound love of technicalities as well — an impossible combination. And yet he goes to work to discomfit Sir Sidney Lee with such evident relish that the reader is fairly entertained even while struggling in the mess of legal verbiage. It is a book that every Shakespeare-Bacon controversialist must have. It contains nothing of value to anybody else. (New York: John Lane Company. 50c.)

The Copyright Office, under the direction of Thorvald Solberg, Register of Copyrights, is publishing serially a complete list of dramatic works copyrighted in this country up to the year 1915. As the titles, authors and publishers are listed, the work will be in effect an exhaustive bibliography of dramatic literature, with more than sixty thousand entries in one alphabetical list. As a reference work the volume will be indispensable. Only one thousand copies are being printed, and these will sell at $4.00 each. Orders are now being booked for complete copies or for the parts as issued.

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THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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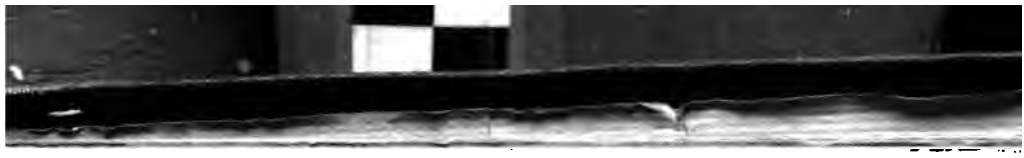
AUGUST 1917

Playing with Light—I. A scene from the Chicago Little Theatre *Passion Play*. The figures stood out in silhouette against no other background than a lighted curtain. See page 195. (Photograph copyright 1915 by Eugene Hutchinson.)



THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Volume I | August, 1917 | Number 4

Wartime Theatres of England and France

By Huntly Carter

I. *England and the Profiteer*

Before proceeding to examine the wartime æsthetic situation in the theatre in England and France, it is necessary to note the commercial and psychological conditions which have strongly influenced this institution. During the war the theatre in England has been in the hands of profiteers. By the theatre I mean the commercial and commercial-æsthetic varieties. There has been no difference between them. Their joint aim has been to make profit out of the war. The truth is, the theatre in all its varieties has been in the sordid hands of money-makers, and if there ever was a time when a conspiracy existed to kill the thing the men of the theatre love, it was between August 1914 and a date to be settled between Heaven and the European powers. If there ever was a period when England was blessed with an idiot theatre, and an idiot spectator to match, it was then. The reason is not far off. To most intelligent people it will be no news that the English people are the most sentimental noodles on earth, and the English playgoer is therefore a person who delights to be found seated in an auditorium chuckling over drops of his own thin sentiment carefully ladled out to him by the theatrical caterer. And between the drops he may be heard to murmur, "Heaven be praised—our own beautiful form of drama is very good to us." It is no news, also, that the said caterer has wits of a sort which enable him to estimate what the playgoer wants, and to feed him on it to over-repletion. No wonder, then, we find him engaged in exploiting the feelings called forth by the war. These feelings fall easily into three divisions: (1) patriotism; (2) hatred; (3) uncontrolled sexual desire.

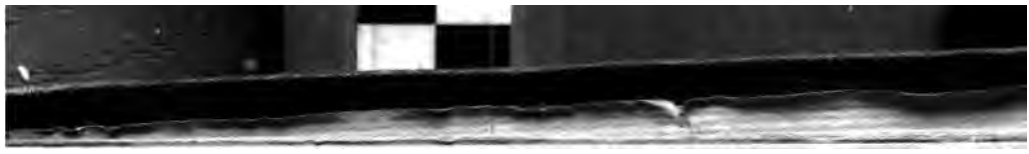
With the outbreak of the war came patriotism. It was not the noble civic patriotism of the early Greeks, but something more modern, actuated by abject fear and national arrogance. England, of course, was in fear of invasion, and there was every need of stirring up public opinion in favor of defense. The theatrical caterer apprehended this, and set to work to assure the playgoer that he was a flaming patriot and a very glutton for

patriotic fare. He decked his theatre with bright and shining posters till its face shone like that of a recruiting sergeant making a brisk capture of raw recruits. Beyond this he packed his stage with all the old-fashioned fudge he could find. Out of the cellar came spectacle, pageant, melodrama, indeed everything capable of uttering shrill patriotic cries. Perhaps this was the best he could do, for when we come to think of it England is not overflowing with the noblest dramatic works of patriotism. The noblest it has are those bequeathed by Shakespeare. But Shakespeare wrote for the Elizabethans, and there is no wartime money in Elizabethan sentiments, even though they be vital and vigorous and clothed with shining loveliness.

Along with partial conscription, and the more complete arming of England, came a change of feeling. The ebullition of fear was succeeded by assurance of safety. Freed from the anxiety of invasion the public turned their attention to whole-hearted hatred of the German, and at the same time discovered a desire to laugh at their late terrifying experiences. Of course, the theatrical caterer promptly proceeded to turn the new attitude to account by administering a mixture of plays containing a strong infusion of red hate and the lust of blood and thunder, and those possessing the power of evoking idiot laughter. So for a time there was a glut of military and murder plays, detective and spy melodramas, a revival of calf-love and schoolgirl sentimentalism in saccharine comedies and farces, and a wholesale importation of American heart-whole tosh in plays of the *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Potash and Perlmutter* sort. To the credit of the latter play, the acting of the two principal parts was uncommonly good.

As the feeling of assurance strengthened, and the public became contented that the fire-zone was receding from England, so the feeling of ill-temper abated and gave rise to one of indifference. People demanded to be amused, but were far too distracted by the unaccustomed current of events to fix their minds on serious matters. The answer they got was an increase of witless sentimentalism which threatened to destroy all serious interest in the theatre. When the war began the problem play promptly departed for Heaven — or the other place. It left its odor behind, however. As this dissolved, so the Gates of Sugary Sentiment swung wide to admit a class of playgoer from whom only proceedings in a divorce court could extort a smile.

I have no space here for taking into consideration the modifications which Zeppelin raids and other startling incidents introduced into the exhibition of skimpy, undramatic and silly



bits of stage sentiment. But there is no doubt that at one time certain influences operated to make the public so indifferent that the caterer was very hard put to it to devise an entertainment sheerly stupid enough to drag them into the auditorium.

The third stage of public feeling was reached with conscription in full blast and England apparelled in khaki. London became the center of great military activity which packed it with a vast number of soldiers. The men were principally those in training, on leave, sick and wounded, and thousands of young, lusty colonials passing through to the front. One of the effects of this "invasion" was a very decided manifestation of sexual mania. Of the origin, psychology and pathology of this mania it is not my purpose to speak. Justice will doubtless be done to the subject hereafter. But I cannot resist the temptation to say that the manifestation coincided with the arrival in our midst of great numbers of voluntary fighters in whom naturally the combatative and female-regarding instincts were very strongly developed. Evidently the blend was sufficiently active to justify the theatrical caterer in changing the theatre from a booby-trap to a hot and strong sexual lure. I will not go into the details of the composition of this lure. It is sufficient to say of it that it consisted of a hodge-podge of bare flesh, strong sexual colors and forms, indecent gestures and movements by bands of thinly-dressed "shy and coy" chorus girls, and suggestive and offensive dialogue by "star" music-hall "turns," who during the war have been increasingly absorbed by the theatre.

By way of proof some significant results may be noticed. One is the violent attacks on the "indecent" aspect of the theatre by responsible writers. Another is an open confession by a leading theatre director that ninety per cent of the audience of a big theatre nowadays consists of soldiers and persons who accompany them. A third is that the censor has just released two venereal disease plays, Brieux's *Damaged Goods* and Ibsen's *Ghosts*. These are being presented for propaganda purposes. I should perhaps mention that a fourth feeling, namely impatience, is beginning to awaken, which will, no doubt, be exploited in turn. This, however, is not a good moment for discussing it.

I will just glance at another aspect of the wartime theatre in England and then cross to France. This aspect, the decorative movement, will probably be of greater interest to the readers of THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE than a description of the theatre in its relation to the manifestation of public sentiment. Of course the movement has a very strong interest for me, seeing that it was

I who did a very great deal indeed in this country to bring its record up to date just before the war began.* This interest made me curious to see whether the pre-war threads would be upheld by bits of wonderful work, or obscured, if not destroyed, by English indifference and boobyism. So, to the time of my recent departure for France, I followed the movement, such as it was, very closely, and recorded my impressions, month by month, in a London publication. In sum the impressions were as follows:

There were two lines of survival of the pre-war movement. On the one hand, certain managers, including Oscar Asche, Basil Dean, Granville Barker, Sir Herbert Tree and Oswald Stoll, continued to shower upon a production or presentation the bedraggled blossoms gathered from the momentous visits of the Russian Ballet and Max Reinhardt, the doings of the Moscow Art Theatre, and from the precious productions by Gordon Craig and William Poel. Upon these continuators, rather than imitators, devolved the business of maintaining the new traditions of stage simplification, color and movement, without, however, leading to any notable results. Others, including Alfred Butt, Charles Cochran, Sir Thomas Beecham, André Charlot and the Stage Society, while exhibiting the same influences, indulged a fainting fashion for encouraging new decorators. The Stage Society were assisted in their enviable intention by the belief that intellectuals were gaining confidence in the expression of vital color and line naturally evoked by character and environment, while the others were led to make their efforts by the conditions of the *revue*, by an assumed public demand for cheerful settings to plays and operas, by the presence in our midst of French and Belgian refugees with considerable decorative talent, and, especially in the direction of simplification, by urgent need of wartime economy.

It was in the *revue* that I fancied I saw the most encouraging means of upholding the new traditions. I knew it was a direct descendant of the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, and had come to England in a highly adulterated form by way of the French Follies under the considerable guidance of the Anglo-French vaudeville actor, Pellésier. In its best form it was a purely theatrical entertainment. It was very intimate in character, and it

* EDITOR'S NOTE.—Huntly Carter's admirable volume, *The New Spirit in Drama and Art*, was the pioneer work in English in this field, and one to which all later writers and artists have been indebted. His later book about Max Reinhardt helped to establish his position as England's leading progressive critic.

favored improvised dialogue, spontaneous acting and a closer *rapprochement* between actor and spectator. To me it had a distinct promise of a return to theatricalism, that is, a form of entertainment in which everybody, including the spectator, takes a part, and which, in this respect, silly as some of it is, does the spectator good, seeing that it tends to restore to him the long-lost power of being provoked into direct dramatic action. With this primitive foundation assured, I felt that there was no reason why the theatre should not make a fresh start at a new and highly significant form of dramatic expression.

A very good specimen of the *revue* started at the appropriate Ambassadors' Theatre, under the management of the Anglo-French Company. Here it announced itself in amusing skits, brilliant French intimate acting, and decorations designed by Belgians of real talent and an English decorator, Weigall. The scenery was of the simplest and gayest character, just a stationary decorative frame and painted cloths forming a three-fold stage according to the revised Shakespearean conception. Properties followed the Japanese principle of being conspicuous by their absence. The promise of development contained in this production was not fulfilled, however. The *revue* caught the commercial eye of the big theatre manager on the lookout for something to replace musical comedy. It began to spread all over London, and invaded the colossal music-halls, for which its intimate character totally unsuited it. There it became a string of senseless music-hall items, and assumed frog-like proportions which plainly said it was filled with wind and ugliness. Thus subjected to profiteering principles it became a pantomime and ceased to exist as an intelligent form of diversion. The only good purpose it served was to weaken the claim of the big theatre to a serious position among dramatic institutions. It reminded one that the big theatre is simply a club where one can talk comfortably without annoying the actors.

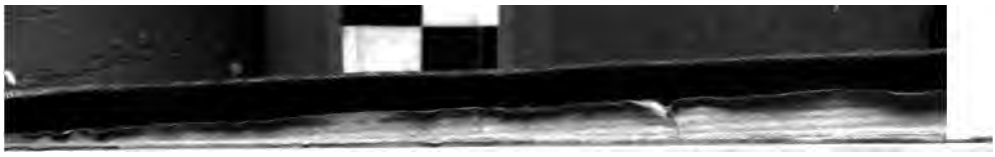
II. *Paris and the Mask of Picasso*

One may observe briefly, and with satisfaction, that the world over which the theatre and the drama have had control in Paris during the war has been a sounder and honester affair than in England. From the outset it was better adapted to receive good theatrical influences. It has been molded by different conditions, such as an established system of conscription, and a practical and patient public. And it is administered to by a classical theatre which understands its immediate needs. To-

day, for instance, national theatres, including the Théâtre Français and the Odéon, tumble over one another in their attempt to keep Paris uplifted by an association with great writers. Of course, side by side with this activity is that of the commercial theatre, which, like its prototype in England, holds good prose, poetry, stimulating æsthetic qualities, even good sense, as of no account. At the same time it must be admitted that indifferent as this theatre is to the higher interests it cannot exclude them altogether. Generally speaking, French acting is of the highest order. And French acting, like murder, will out even in the worst conducted theatre.

Beyond the classical repertory and the idiot entertainment with its leaven of good acting, there are certain pre-war influences, and influences waiting to be born, operating upon the collective and individual minds. This means that while the war has not inspired any great new form of expression in art, music, drama, poetry and literature, and while it has modified some forms and destroyed others, it has attracted to Paris live tendencies and a great number of refugee artists of all nationalities, and in this and other ways has helped to prepare for momentous developments. One notices that it is keeping the Russian Ballets constantly on the move, so to speak, in a form and in countries — France, Italy and Spain — particularly suited to their development. Everywhere they go they are appealing to extremist decorators — futurists, cubists, simultanists, analytical-synthetists — for new ideas, and thereby receiving material for a renewed life, while handing out ideas that will certainly change both the form of the drama and the theatre.

In Paris, at any rate, where the Russian Ballets have just had a short season, some new productions have exercised a very marked influence upon dramatic and æsthetic opinion, while exhibiting a variety of influences received from vital quarters. To judge by the fragments presented, this particular form of dance-drama is going through a very important period of research. But it is into form rather than principle. Thus while the old principles of simplicity, unity and continuity are still held in view, the old realistic forms of music, movement and decoration are yielding to new realistic abstractions which suggest a new form of theatrical symbolism. By way of example of the survival of first principles one was privileged to find in the Paris repertory that perfect piece of unity and continuity in sound, color and movement, the wonderful marionette ballet, *Petrouchka*, and the equally successful *Les Sylphides*, with its amazing wave-



like combinations evoked by the music. To these early pieces one offers the laurel wreath as a natural gift. For my own part, I turn with greatest interest to the new forms revealed by the new productions. One misses from some of them the proportion, balance and strict unity which are part and parcel of the well-made ballet, and one finds in them a clash of theory between the three essential elements, perhaps necessary to challenge controversy and stimulate ideas, but hard to justify for traditional Russian ballet. This clash is due to the riotous invasion of newcomers. There is Léonide Massine, the choreographer, who is seeking to establish something startling by way of abstract movement. There is Strawinsky, the composer of *Petrouchka*, who is delving deep into primitive sources for a music-form suited to the plastic one. There are Balla and Depero, the Italian futurists, with their conception of simultaneous form.* And there is Picasso, the Spaniard, with his conception of analytical-synthetic form. These and others are busy remodelling the Russian Ballets, with significant effect.

Of the sample of Picasso's stage work presented at the Châtelet Theatre a great deal might be said. Indeed a great deal has been said, of the wrong sort, by the Paris press. Established journals like *Le Temps* and *L'Intransegeant* have simply gone out of their way to be offensive, just as English critics did when *The New Age*, acting on my recommendation, introduced Picasso's work to the English public. But to works of great originality abuse is the sincerest form of compliment, and perhaps abuse is necessary to call widest attention to some ideas of value in the ballet *Parade*. The most important of these is that of concealing the performer under a mask. The modern proposal to remove the identity of the performer by a mask that shall accord with the intentions of the movement which he expresses, is not new. Long ago it met the fine æsthetic taste of Gordon Craig. And for years I have dreamed in my philosophy of a mask of reality. To me it seems that the theatre needs a mask to obliterate it as a theatre; acting needs one to obliterate the actor. So what is required is a mask to bring acting or dance-movement to the maximum degree of intensity, till such time as acting is sufficiently intense to obliterate the actor, theatre and all visible objects and agents.

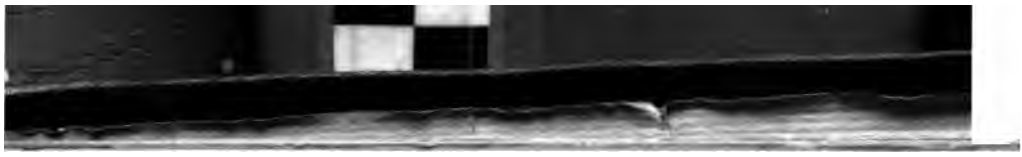
Now one notes with satisfaction that Picasso is engaged pouring a mask of reality over appearances. Unfortunately, however,

* See illustrations on second page following.

it is not a fluid mask. It is the analytical-synthesis of character and environment with which he has made us familiar in his paintings. In *Parade* he presents two sets of characters, the past circus performer and the future one. The former is the old actual stage figure who dominates and destroys the dramatic effect by presence and personality. The latter is a new realistic symbol carefully brought into relation with other symbols and combining elements fitting it to work together with them. These elements have never appeared on the stage before. They are accretions stuck on to the actor, who thus presents a kaleidoscopic view of all the springs of action. By this aid any eye can penetrate its mysteries. Character is like a skeleton clock working in full view of the spectator, and its revelations are recorded by a merciless dial. But the record is only an instantaneous one. The clock works, but one sees only a moment of its working. Rightly the mask should continue to unfold till all its material accretions have melted away and nothing remains but the spiritual aspect of the wearer. This kind of transformation is, I take it, the true function of the drama. It is possible that new men are waiting to be permitted to promote the function. If so, one has no notion of their identity as yet. Whoever they may be, they will show amazing skill in unfolding character from the material to the spiritual level by means of significant movement.

If this appears to set Picasso aside as one unlikely to accomplish work of the desired order, it is because Picasso's conception of a masked figure is purely æsthetic or decorative. It does not reveal dramatic instinct. Moreover it bears no reference to the possible development of stage lighting. I am convinced that lighting will play a very great part in the future great form of dramatic representation, that is, the conversion of character from the material to the spiritual in view of the spectator, and in such a manner as to cause the spectator to imagine that it is he who is undergoing the conversion. Indeed it is extremely probable that lighting will become the sole form of stage decoration after the war. And it is probable that the big theatre will go entirely out of fashion. I think the most significant thing arising out of the wartime representation of the Russian Ballets is a prophecy of a growing demand for a new and suitable form of theatre in which dramatic productions may be fully experienced by every spectator in the auditorium.

I hope to have more to say on this subject, on the details of new ideas and proposals such as the *théâtre simultané*, and on the artistic *Cabarets Montmartois*, in the next issue.



The upper design is a setting by Giacomo Balla for Strawinsky's *Le Feu d'Artifice*. The lower shows costumes for Strawinsky's *Le Chant du Rossignol*, created and realized by the futurist painter Depero. The figure on the left is the Court Lady (in yellow, blue, and green), and on the right the Mandarin (in red and black). Reproduced by courtesy of *Sic*, Paris. See page 157.

A scene from *The Deluded Dragon* as produced by the Chicago Little Theatre puppets. Reprinted by courtesy of the *Century Magazine*. (Photograph by Florence Hendershot.)

Puppets at the Chicago Little Theatre

By Hettie Louise Mick

Three years ago Ellen Van Volkenburg and Harriet Edgerton visited the puppet shows of Germany and Italy in the hope of establishing one in connection with the Chicago Little Theatre. Miss Van Volkenburg (Mrs. Maurice Browne) and Mrs. Edgerton traveled far before they received any encouragement. But one day, in a little out-of-the-way town, they chanced upon three sisters who made puppets of such daintiness and delicacy, of such fantastic lightness, and suggestive of such infinite capacities of imagination, that they were wholly charmed. They examined the filmy dolls, comprised of heads and transparent draperies, watched their plays of gentle mystery, and forthwith decided that the world of fantasy was the world for puppets.

They brought home a tiny, well-made German puppet as an example from which to build. Kathleen Wheeler, a young sculptress from England, was secured to carve the heads and bodies, and the three women, with one or two very new and somewhat doubtful apprentices, started to produce their first puppet show.

Finding no immediate literature available, they decided to build their plays as well as their puppets. Taking, for foundation, a rather well-known Chinese legend, they started to rehearse *The Deluded Dragon*, composing their lines as they built up the story. By the time the "puppeteers" had learned their parts, Miss Wheeler had carved the puppets, and they were ready to start. In too great eagerness to see the first-fruits of their work, however, they hurried the production of the play, with the result that the puppets, insecurely handled, wobbled and waved in the air; and the fierce but fragile dragon parted in the middle, his five heads swinging free of his timorously lashing tail. That same year Reginald Arkell's charming fantasy *Columbine* was produced with more patience, and proved a wholly delightful, almost finished thing.

The next year, with fresh enthusiasm, dropping the haphazard methods of *The Deluded Dragon*, two familiar fairy-tales, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Little Mermaid*, were dramatized and produced, Mrs. Edgerton writing the former, and Miss Wheeler making the entire production of *The Little Mermaid*. *Jack and the Beanstalk*, though contributing little or nothing to the realization of the ultimate aim of the now enthusiastic workers,

[illegible] from the audience.

[illegible] (1919–1920), the [illegible] and produced a play with puppets [illegible] the attention of [illegible] and their [illegible] but now the [illegible] — to give the children a [illegible] that a play be produced for them. It is [illegible] suggested Shakespeare's [illegible] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With the production [illegible] April [illegible] rehearsals and puppet-making were begun in February. Five puppeteers [illegible] forty-four puppets. [illegible] mechanical difficulties gasped [illegible] only from five to eight puppets, [illegible] and rarely these [illegible] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, throughout the entire play five puppeteers and one assistant were [illegible] every scene, each of the five handling (and [illegible]) three or four principal characters.

Puck, who had been known formerly as the rather stiff little fairy who introduced and closed each play in rhyme, now became the romping, plump elf, tumbling through the air, doubling up in chuckling glee upon his toadstool, and pushing his annoying little person into every disconcerted mortal's way. Titania emerged a glowing queen of filmy draperies attended by flitting elves, and Oberon resumed his crafty, flashing earth-character, his attendants being two inflated and wholly impudent small bugs. The Mechanicals, while clumsy, fulfilled their parts well and brought the outworn humor of Shakespeare into hilarious reality, the scene between Pyramus and Thisbe never failing to bring roars of appreciation from the audience. Only the Greeks were a dank and dismal failure. Hurriedly constructed to meet the rapidly approaching production date, they were awkward, long headed, stiff jointed creatures, highly unlike their graceful originals.

In spite of the gigantic strides it marked in the mechanism of puppet manipulation, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not a finished production. The dolls were in some cases unbalanced

and difficult of management; the puppeteers were not entirely skillful, as some of them were handling puppets for the first time. But the lighting and settings, and the pervading atmosphere of exquisite unreality, were such that audiences came night after night for five weeks, and at the end of that time, when the theatre closed for the season, demanded more. Maurice Browne, when called in to witness the "dress" rehearsal, exclaimed enthusiastically: "That is a thing I should like Euripides, J. M. Barrie, Shakespeare, Gilbert Murray—and God to see!"

The third year — the season just past — ushered in a new era for puppets. Whereas formerly Mrs. Browne had had the entire responsibility on her shoulders, even to pouring enthusiasm into the somewhat skeptical young women who worked under her, now the puppeteers began to realize something of the possibilities of this new-old art, and to supply their own enthusiasm. They delved whole-heartedly into the intricate details of writing plays suitable for production by their small actors, into improved methods of manipulation, and even to some extent into the construction of the marionettes themselves. This season, too, marked the inauguration by the puppets of a stage-manager all their own. H. Carroll French, one of the founders of the Little Theatre in South Bend, became the "father" of all the puppets, constructing them,—in conjunction with Miss Wheeler,—building their scenery, and keeping them in repair.

The opening bill for that season was my own adaptation of the two little German fairy tales, *The Frog Prince* and *Little Red Riding-Hood*, followed, after some vicissitudes, by *Alice in Wonderland*. Through the courtesy of Tony Sarg, of New York, in allowing the adaptation of some of his ideas, Mr. French revolutionized the mechanical structure of the marionettes. The first frames had been made after the German model, and the puppets strung by wires and moved by six strings each. Mr. French reconstructed their bodies, making them of wire instead of wood, weighting the feet, and building a different frame for each puppet according to its individual needs and idiosyncrasies. The new frames were horizontal, and no wires were used. While these new puppets have fewer actual joints than the old, they are more sensitive to manipulation, and, with a smaller number of different movements, give a more clear-cut and individual characterization.

The ideal, needless to say, was not reached in *Alice in Wonderland*, but it was at least sensed. This year, too, saw the first "tour" of the puppets. Besides several trips into suburbs of

Chicago, they packed themselves bag and baggage, stage, sets, lights, and wardrobe (consisting of themselves), and hied them to St. Louis, where they gave four performances under the auspices of the Drama League. Their novelty and ingenuity pleased their audiences highly, but their workmen were made to see many opportunities for improvement.

The future is expected to bring forth further experiments in size and sensitiveness, elaboration in stage construction (which works inversely toward simplification in handling), a new line of folk literature and folk songs, and higher flights of fantasy. As yet, of course, the real field for the marionette has not been entered. In the experimentation of these past three years, the fact has revealed itself convincingly that they are not for children, as is the immediate assumption. Children as a whole express a much keener appreciation for their own friend, Charlie Chaplin; and unless the antics of the puppets are peculiarly Chaplinesque, they are inclined to ennui, which malady in children generally expresses itself in anything but lethargy. Their elders are the ones who watch with interest, chuckle with delight, and wax enthusiastic concerning possibilities of future achievement.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has been the most successful puppet play produced at the Little Theatre, in spite of the mechanical improvements of *Alice in Wonderland*; and while *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, produced expressly for grown-ups, bored the children, they were comparatively little more interested in the fairy tales and *Alice in Wonderland*, produced for their special benefit.

The future of the puppets undoubtedly lies in the direction of Gordon Craig's Übermarionette, the supreme art of acting with the elimination of the personality of the individual actor. Their immobile faces, their quiet dignity and lack of temperament and mood, make for a clean-cut art, and expression of understanding, wisdom and maturity, rather than for a pretty amusement for children.

The task of making puppet productions an art is a stupendous one, and requires the utter devotion of a more or less permanent group of players, organized and consecrated to this work alone, with enough foresight to sense their possibilities, and enough patience to wade through their difficulties.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This is the first of a series of articles on puppets and puppet theatres of America and Europe.

Scenes from *Columbine* as produced by the Chicago Little Theatre puppets. Reprinted by courtesy of *Century Magazine*. (Photograph by Florence Hendershot.)

OSKAR KAUFMANN, Architect — From *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*

Those Germans!

NOW THAT everybody is busy showing up the barbarism of the Germans, we wish to expose their cruelty as seen in the playhouse. For many years the Germans have been building theatres so much finer than those of England and France and America that a comparison is extremely humiliating to all the Allied peoples—obviously a most refined sort of cruelty. And then, they have spoiled the whole theatre game as the American speculator plays it.

Consider this picture, for instance. It shows how the German architects spoiled the playgoer by making him comfortable. The general air of roominess, and the ample cushioned chairs, are totally unlike anything to be seen in our theatres. Any American manager could show them how to squeeze two more rows of seats into that balcony.

Note, too, that these aristocratic Germans have removed the boxes from the front of the house, and placed them inconspicuously against the back wall, behind the last row of balcony seats. What a blow this would be to the democratic pretentiousness of the wealthy classes in England and France and America, where they are accustomed to display themselves in glittering proximity to the stage.

And see how ruthlessly the architect has abandoned accepted styles of theatre decoration. No tinsel, no gilt, no stenciling, no plush—all the gorgeous Victorian richness destroyed!

Seriously, we must say—even at risk of being jailed for giving aid and comfort to an enemy nation—that the Germans have the best theatres in the world. However we may dislike their politics, we must grant that they are decades ahead of us in stage production, in theatre administration, and, most of all, in theatre architecture. And so we publish this photograph, hoping that some Americans may be so humiliated that they will try to create in this country playhouses as comfortable, as democratic, and as simple in decoration as this German one.

The Most Important Thing in the Theatre

THERE are many ideals that distinguish the art theatre from the business theatre. One immediately thinks of imaginative plays, ensemble acting, and simplified and appropriate staging, as primary aims of the progressive theatre groups. But there is an ideal that includes and goes beyond all these, and which should be the first concern of the non-commercial playhouses. Perhaps the best name for it is "the synthetic ideal."

I

The synthetic ideal has to do with the attainment of that elusive quality which makes for rounded-out, spiritually unified productions. It may be called rhythm, or style, or merely artistic unity. It finds its rise in the play, and it colors the acting, the lighting, the setting and all other elements of the staging. When fully realized, it goes further and creates an atmosphere which lies over the whole production as seen in the theatre. It imparts an elusive something that evokes a definite *mood* over and above the spectator's usual reactions to drama.

In pursuing this quality I have come to believe that there is in every important drama a latent *art-value*, as distinguished from its dramatic value, or acting value, or spectacular value. It is this "over-value" that the larger ideal aims to capture. And until we do capture it we shall not know the truest art of the theatre.

Certain periods in history have been known as the golden ages of playwriting, while others have been celebrated as the ages of great acting, and still others as eras of gorgeous and spectacular staging. To-day we excel in none of these contributive arts; but we have a new conception, a new ideal of a perfect harmony of them all. We have discovered that playwriting is an incomplete art, that acting properly exists not to glorify an actor's personality but only as a means to represent drama, and that the stage setting is rightly only a frame for the action. We are searching for a principle which will bring these incomplete arts into an artistic unity and give full scope to the drama as a *theatre-play*, and not as a bit of dramatic poetry recited by a charming actor before a pleasing background. The capturing of this principle may well be modernity's most significant contribution to the art of the theatre. Certainly the search for unity,

harmony and mood, the effort to find a synthesis of all the forces of the theatre, is the most typical earmark of the insurgent movement.

II

The synthetic ideal implies the existence of a new type of artist in the theatre: a director who has enough imaginative insight and creative ability to grasp the full spiritual implication of the dramatist's work, and then to harmonize play, acting and setting, and finally to add a rhythm or style or spiritual unity characteristic of his own artistic perception. The written play confines him within certain limits. But he reënforces the poet's conception by bringing to the staging an originality of his own.

As it concerns the dramatist the new ideal means that the playwright must either be the director of his own productions, or submit his written work to the creative processes of an artist-interpreter—just as in music the composer must leave his work to the interpretation of a violinist or pianist or orchestra-director. Some people argue that it is wrong to inject a second artist between the playwright and the public: that the dramatist's work should be staged according to his instructions, as put down in the stage directions, without change. That is exactly like saying that a musical composition should be played as it is printed and not by an artist. The processes of acting, rehearsing, and designing lighting and setting, are creative; and unless there is a coördinating mind, a binding artistic sense, the production will be expressionless and incoherent.

As it concerns the actors, the scene-builders, the electrician and the other workers on the stage, the search for unity means that they must be always obedient to the will of the director, working sympathetically, "with answering minds," to evoke the one desired impression. The actor may enjoy a certain latitude of interpretation, but it must always be within such limitations that it will not disturb the ensemble as visualized by the artist-director.

III

The synthetic ideal, although seldom called by that name, lies behind the indeterminate longing, theorizing and actual work of practically all the important insurgents of both Europe and America.

It is what Adolphe Appia sought when he tried to create an "inner unity" for the Wagner music-dramas by binding the setting and action to the music through atmospheric lighting. Taking his pattern of moods from the music, he designed a series of

lighting effects in perfect harmony with the emotional and spiritual sequence of the drama; he subordinated the settings through simplification and by throwing over them a veil of light or darkness, really substituting creative atmosphere for the usual painted or plastic scene; and he intensified the action by cunning manipulation of light and shade, playing groups of actors against masses of shadows and bursts of light, or half revealing them in foggy grays. He will be remembered through all time for what he taught theatre artists about the harmonizing value of lights.

The synthesis sought by Gordon Craig is one in which movement largely takes the place of psychological action, but in which scene, color, lights, voice, and music have place. In order to achieve perfect unity of these various elements, he would, if possible, have the artist-producer be playwright, designer of settings, lighting and costumes, and composer of the music, as well as director. In case he cannot write his own dramas he must be able to visualize completely the original poet's intention.

Craig goes farther than any other leader in his insistence upon the absolute necessity of a man of vision in the director's position, and he would give that man the greatest breadth of original invention. He writes: "I let my scene grow out of not merely the play, but from broad sweeps of thought which the play has conjured up in me. . . . . We are concerned with the heart of this thing, and with loving and understanding it. Therefore approach it, and do not let yourself be attracted away by the idea of scene as an end in itself, of costume as an end in itself, or of stage management or any of these things, and never lose hold of your determination to win through to the secret—the secret which lies in the creation of another beauty, and then all will be well."

That is a poet's statement of the art theatre's problem and its ideal: "the creation of another beauty" while "concerned with the heart of" the dramatist's play, "and with loving and understanding it." In solving the problem Gordon Craig came to many radical conclusions, regarding subordination of setting, repression of the personality of the actor, designed movement, and the value of color and light in creating atmosphere, which have since become commonplaces of the new movement. But in all his experiments, through all his changing theories, his chief aim has been the creation of mood, the evoking of a single impression in place of the scattered appeals of the usual dramatic production.

Since the realization of a play's "art-value" is outwardly visible only in the setting, the lighting and the method of acting,

it is easy for the shrewd opportunist to pick up the external features and achieve a sort of caricature of the true art theatre production, without grasping the secret heart of the thing. The difference between the old sort of production and the new seems to lie entirely in the *manner* of staging; and so the astute commercial manager picks up a few mannerisms, gives out that he is staging in the new method, and draws a crowd. This sort of distortion of the synthetic method must be guarded against.

Even so eminent a director as Max Reinhardt cannot be entirely freed from the charge of mannerism: he has often made the method obtrusively evident, to the loss of the original author's intended effect. There is no doubt that he has achieved a unifying system; but the unity often is something superimposed by Reinhardt, and not a synthesis growing out of the heart of the play.

IV

Stylization in its broadest sense means the unifying of the play by carrying a definite "style" through all parts of the production. In this broad interpretation, the term is a synonym for synthetic treatment. Stylization has recently been narrowed by many writers to mean the application of individual style to the play's setting. But even when the unifying process is thus confined to the *mise en scène*, it is still a powerful factor in imparting continuity and singleness of impression to the production.

It happens that the designing of appropriate settings is the direction in which all countries have made greatest progress towards the new ideal. The artists concerned have developed certain inventions which are definite aids to the attainment of harmony of impression. New lighting systems make possible the creation of atmospheric effects which are delicately attuned to the most subtle emotional or spiritual values of the play; new mechanical devices make possible rapid change of scene, thus doing away with the long between-acts waits which used to do so much to destroy continuity of interest and mood; and adaptable settings, wherein certain elements remain through several changes of scene, carrying a subconscious sense of oneness through several scenes, bring a new harmony of background. Kenneth Macgowan speaks, for instance, of "a curious unity" achieved when Joseph Urban used a permanent "skeleton" setting through all the scenes of *The Love of the Three Kings.* And William Butler Yeats writes enthusiastically of a lingering "tone" of restfulness and beauty running through a series of arrangements of Gordon Craig's screens.

It may be that through the search for the ideal, through applying the unifying principle to the best plays we now know, the art theatres will discover new forms of drama more beautiful than any so far developed. Perhaps that decorative, typically theatric, dehumanized art which many of us have visualized fleetingly while we dreamed over the pages of Gordon Craig's essays will become a reality when the art theatre method is studied, played with, and carried to its most characteristic achievement. It may be that Claude Bragdon will realize his dream of an art of moving color; or that Maurice Browne and Cloyd Head, already pioneers in America's pursuit of an art theatre technique, will prove that beyond all the experiments with the story-plays of the playwrights there lies a sort of rhythmic art of the theatre as yet ungrasped and only half guessed. But until we restore artistic unity to the stage, until we fit the play again to the theatre and learn thereby the secret of unified impression—until, in short, we follow up the first ideal of the art theatre, synthetic production—we cannot achieve what lies beyond.

SHELDON CHENEY.

At Last—A National Theatre

A Note on the Portentous Doings at Washington

AT LAST America has a national theatre. At least there is the newly dedicated National Sylvan Theatre, which is government-owned, and in which the seats are free to the people—"thus affording a democratic center of amusement." This new playhouse which is receiving so much attention from the press is directed by no less an artist than Col. W. H. Harts, Superintendent of Parks in Washington. We had not before heard of this gentleman in connection with the art of the theatre, but we take it for granted that the Government searched the field thoroughly and then chose the artist-director best fitted to take charge of our first national playhouse.

A country which reveres art does not open a national theatre lightly. Surely if the dedicatory play is not one of Shakespeare's, it must at least be a masque by our own Percy MacKaye. But the masque at Washington turns out to be by Mrs. Christian Hemmick. The artistic significance of the name escapes us. But we pass that by, for the remarkable title of the play arrests attention. It is *The Drama Triumphant.*

We had about made up our mind that these were poor days for the drama, with the theatres fallen into the hands of speculators, and our young actors aping the mannerisms of a few "stars" who have caught on with the public, and journalists and sign-painters trying to fill the shoes that should be worn by inspired poets and trained artists. But this masque affects to prove otherwise. It is divided into three parts: "The Birth of the Drama" on Mount Olympus; "The Degradation of the Drama" in mediæval England; and finally "The Triumph of the Drama"—in Washington, D.C., June 1, 1917.

We judge from reports that the triumph was not entirely convincing. The masque, indeed, resembled nothing so much as a third-rate variety show as staged by a Ladies' Aid Society. Our only quarrel with the author's arrangement of her material is that she did not lump the whole thing under her second-episode title, "The Degradation of the Drama," and let it go at that. Only, of course, we would have wanted a national committee to "manage" that part, with Marc Klaw and Lee Shubert in general charge. And in order to show the degradation at its finest, we would have included one of Gertrude Hoffmann's *revues*, before settings done in New York's best studios, and a bit from one of George Broadhurst's prostitute-plays, along with some average Broadway acting.

We note that Shakespeare did get into the celebration, in the section labeled "The Triumph of the Drama." For we find a "tabloid version" of *The Taming of the Shrew* sandwiched triumphantly between a selection by "Mme. Tamki Miura" and a recitation by Henry E. Dixey. And to clinch the victory beyond all doubt, the whole thing ended in a first-class patriotic musical-comedy finale, to the strains of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Our correspondents add that the acoustics of the theatre are so poor that the actors could not be heard, the orchestra was so far away that most of the vocal solos were failures, and the lighting was generally inadequate—but that there was some pretty dancing.

God help us if our national theatre must rise on such foundations!

We believe that we have found the beginnings of America's national theatre in certain humble experiments in various parts of the country. Because they have their roots in native soil, and because they are training artists to understand the needs of the theatre, we look to the little theatre groups to build foundations on which a chain of American art theatres will some day rise. We believe that, under proper guidance and endowment, the little theatres and other insurgent groups will develop beyond the incompetence of amateurism. They and a few choice spirits from the commercial theatre will develop a new sort of professionalism, finer than any that the theatre now knows. They will build playhouses dedicated to art and not to business, in the West and the South as well as in the East. And that will be our national theatre. It is the only sort of national theatre that is possible in a group of federated states that exists without an art capital.

As for the project at Washington, let us try to observe a sense of proportion in assigning it to its niche in the dramatic world. National ownership and the presence of the President and his Cabinet at the dedication mean nothing, so long as the Government does not place the theatre in the hands of artists. Mrs. Hemmick deserves credit for adding another fairly interesting open-air theatre to the already long list; but the activities in it can count for little so long as they are hastily prepared and without artistic unity—and especially, so long as they incorporate merely tag-ends from the business stage. And finally, no significance beyond that of novelty can be attached to the national character of any theatre until the Government places it in charge of a trained artist-director, who in turn must be responsible to a supervising board of experienced artists and art-lovers—and not to a park superintendent or an inexperienced group of amateurs.

Playing with Light—II. Scene from *The Glittering Gate* as produced at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York. (Photograph by White, New York.)

Playing with Light—III. Scene from *The Glittering Gate* as produced at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit. Setting by Sam Hume. (Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.)

Plays for Little Theatres

By Stephen Allard

In the many recently published lists of plays suitable for production in little theatres, or in other non-commercial playhouses, one finds a total lack of data about the types of play described, and one is seldom informed about the ownership of producing rights. The following list, which will be continued serially in Theatre Arts Magazine, is designed to tell in a few words the character of each play, and to indicate where texts and acting rights may be obtained.

Lists obtained from little theatre directors have proved to be so contradictory, in their indications of what is in keeping with little theatre ideals, that it seems wiser not to publish them verbatim, as originally planned, but rather to submit them to judgment by one mind and one standard. No play will be added until after a personal reading by the present writer, and, if possible, not until after seeing a production. In general, the standard adopted is this: The play must have more than mere amusement value, in the direction of poetry, or emotional force, or thought-provoking ideas; it must be fitted for production on small or at least medium-sized stages; and it must have something of that indefinable quality, literary or artistic, which lifts a play above the level of vaudeville and "amateur pieces" toward the level of art theatre material.

There has been so much pirating of plays by amateurs that special trouble has been taken to make the list authoritative in its references to ownership of acting rights. To produce a play without permission, and without paying the royalty demanded, is no less than stealing another man's property. By providing the addresses of the owners of acting rights, we hope to make that sort of larceny less prevalent.

The present installment includes a group of one-act plays which have already proved successful in American little theatres.

1. *The Lost Silk Hat* by Lord Dunsany. This is perhaps the best one-act piece in the whole group of English light comedies. It has enough literary merit to lift it far above the average play of its type. It demands subtle acting, and lends itself well to stylistic staging. The text is published in *Five Plays* by Lord Dunsany (Boston: Little, Brown). The acting rights are still owned by Lord Dunsany, to whom application should be made in care of the publishers, or at Castle Dunsany, County Meath, Ireland.

2. *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell. A tense, gripping little play, dealing with the barren life of a New England farm woman. While the theme is tragic, the action avoids all violence. It is one of the best one-act character-dramas

yet written by an American playwright. Published by Frank Shay, New York. For production rights and terms the author should be addressed at 1 Milligan Place, New York City.

3. *The Maker of Dreams* by Oliphant Down. This favorite little fantasy is one of the prettiest of Pierrot plays. It is very slight in story, and somewhat sugary; but it has a lyric quality and a tenderness of feeling that make it charming when sympathetically played. It has the additional advantage of a small cast, only three characters being called for. Published by Gowans and Gray, London. Rights can be obtained from Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City.

4. *Lithuania* by Rupert Brooke. An unpleasant play of the very realistic sort, but marked by a certain literary value and by smashing dramatic effect. It is one of the best examples of a brutally truthful sort of drama—but not for those who shrink from shocking the sensibilities of their audiences. Printed text and acting rights can be obtained from the Chicago Little Theatre, Monadnock Building, Chicago.

5. *The Rising of the Moon* by Lady Gregory. Long a favorite with amateur producing groups, this excellent little play also lends itself well to professional production. It combines a serious incident with more or less humor, its one difficulty lying in the Irish dialect. Published in *Seven Short Plays* by Lady Gregory (New York: Putnam's). For rights of production address Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City.

6. *The Constant Lover* by St. John Hankin. A duologue of the most artificial type, but when subtly played one of the brightest of light comedies. It affords the scene-designer a chance to create an equally artificial and conventionalized setting. Published in *The Dramatic Works of St. John Hankin* (New York: Kennerley). Production rights can be secured from Miss Alice Kauser, 1402 Broadway, New York.

7. *The Bank Account* by Howard Brock. A serious drama in which three characters work out a near-tragedy in an interesting way. While it has little literary merit, its dramatic effectiveness and character drawing make it worthy of production. It has the added value of not having been produced extensively. For manuscript and acting rights the author should be addressed in care of *The Boston Post*.

8. *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge. This is one of the most poignant tragedies in the language, and is deservedly a favorite in the little theatres. The Irish accent may present difficulties, but in proper presentation the work is a masterpiece. Published by J. M. Luce & Company, Boston. Acting rights can be obtained from Samuel French, 28 West 38th Street, New York City.

9. *Suppressed Desires* by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell. The purely farcical elements of this satire on Freudian theories almost rob it of a place in any list of plays for serious theatres. But the fun is so genuine, and the satire so pointed, that it rises above the class of empty farce. Certainly no little theatre can make a mistake in producing it to balance an otherwise heavy bill. Published in *Provincetown Plays: Second Series* (New York: Frank Shay). For acting rights the authors should be addressed at 1 Milligan Place, New York City.

10. *Duty* by Seumas O'Brien. An Irish dialect comedy that borders on the farcical at times, and again on the tragic. For those who can preserve the raciness of the speech and the humor of the Irish characterization, the play is well worth producing. Published by Little, Brown & Company of Boston, from whom the acting rights can be secured.

11. *The Will* by J. M. Barrie. This somewhat unpleasant character-study demands unusual acting ability, and perhaps for that reason has seldom been seen in the little theatres. For the advanced groups it offers unusual dramatic possibilities. Published in *Half Hours*, J. M. Barrie (New York: Scribner's). Production rights can be obtained from Charles Frohman, Inc., Empire Theatre, New York.

12. *Joint Owners in Spain* by Alice Brown. This slight comedy, in which two quarrelsome inmates of an old ladies' home settle their troubles in amusing fashion, has been popular with the little theatres. There is very little plot-interest, but the character studies and the incidental humor make the piece "cary" well. The printed text and acting rights can be obtained from the Chicago Little Theatre, Monadnock Building, Chicago.

13. *The Clod* by Lewis Beach. This Civil War play is one of the most effective bits of realism yet written by an American playwright. It lacks literary value, and borders on melodrama; but in the list of "thrillers" that rise above the average, it takes high place. The text appears in *Washington Square Plays*, published by Doubleday, Page & Company. Acting rights can be obtained through the Washington Square Players, Comedy Theatre, New York.

(*To be continued.*)

Oriental and Western Acting

"INDIAN acting and dancing is a deliberate art. Nothing is left to chance; the actor no more yields to the impulse of the moment in gesture than in the spoken word. When the curtain rises, indeed, it is too late to begin the making of a new work of art. . . .

"There is no reason why an accepted gesture-language should be varied with a view to set off advantageously the actor's personality. It is the action, not the actor, which is essential to dramatic art. . . . The actor who merely exhibits *himself* is eliminated altogether. . . .

"The behavior of the artist must of necessity be studied, and not impulsive; for the human actor, who seeks to depict the drama of heaven, is not himself a god, and only attains to perfect art through conscious discipline. . . . The more deeply we penetrate the technique of any typical Oriental art, the more we find that what appears to be individual, impulsive and 'natural,' is actually long-inherited, well-considered and well-bred. Under these conditions life itself becomes a ritual. . . .

"The secret of all art is self-forgetfulness.

"Indian acting is a poetic art, an interpretation of life, while modern European acting, apart from any question of the words, is prose, or imitation."—ANANDA COOMARASWAMY in the Introduction of *The Mirror of Gesture.*

The Moscow Art Theatre: A Model

By N. Ostrovsky

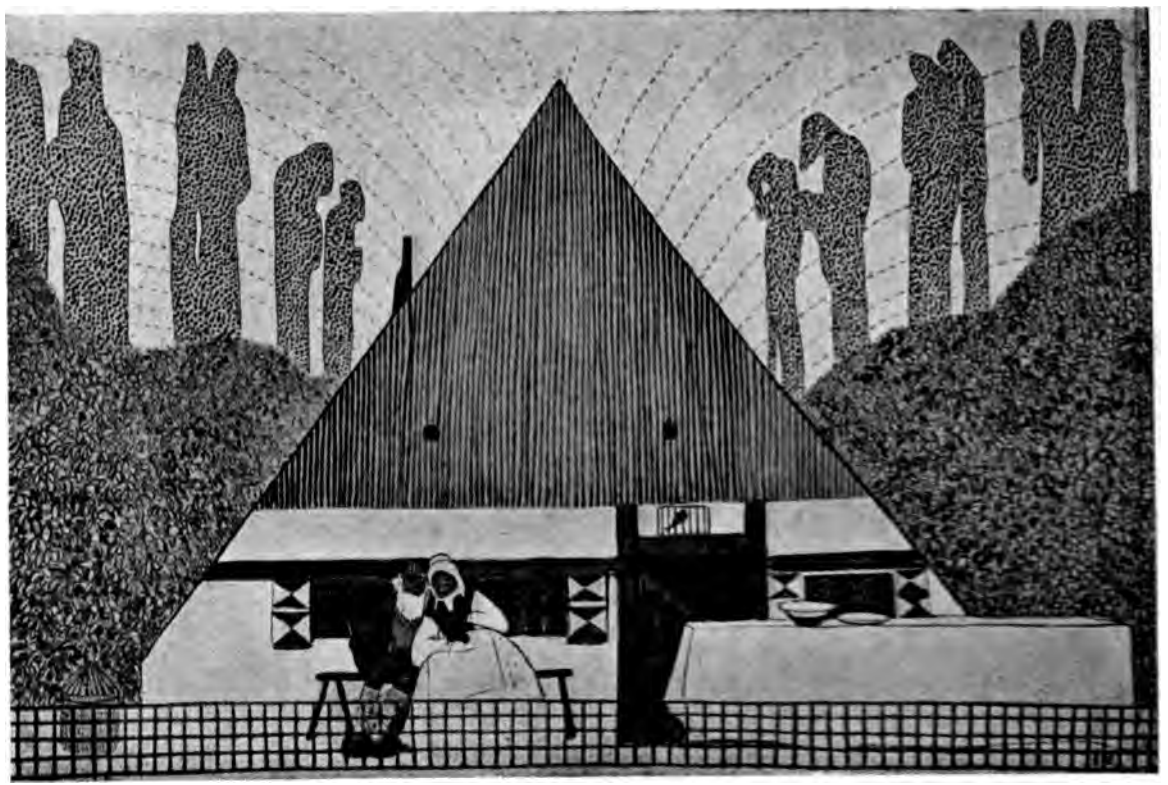
The Moscow Art Theatre, sometimes known as "The Sea-Gull Theatre," is probably the most important center of dramatic art in Europe. It is not a theatre in the American sense. That is, it is not merely a building to which travelling companies come. Nor is it like your stock companies, which are based on purely commercial standards, and in which the actors have no more interest than that of making a living and playing up their personal acting. The Moscow Art Theatre is more like an art institution, or a craftsmen's coöperative society. It is hardly too much to say that it is the one art institution in Russia that is best known to the world.

The history of the theatre began with the revolt of a forward-seeing playwright, Nemirovitch-Danchenko, against the stupid conservatism of the established Russian theatres. He was a dramatic teacher as well as a writer — the sort of man whom the American theatre merchants would call a theorist and an outsider. He met in 1897 the since-famous Konstantin Stanislavsky, who at that time had become known only for his connection with an amateur dramatic society. The two formed a partnership and determined to start a new kind of theatre.

The first company was made up chiefly of amateurs. Rehearsals were started in a barn in the suburbs of Moscow — just as humbly as many of your American little theatres are starting. The first productions, which were given in the unsympathetic atmosphere of a variety theatre, were treated to a storm of abuse from the critics and the men of the older theatres. But a few people saw a new something in the company's work, and the founders persisted in their venture.

In the early years of the project the company was hampered by lack of money, and like many other worthy art ventures, this one contracted a large debt during its first year. But it found means to continue, and later became an exceedingly profitable enterprise. At the end of its worst season, a wealthy amateur of Moscow became interested, and secured the present home of the theatre, building for it one of the most modern stages in Europe.

The productions at the theatre are generally divided into three groups. First, there was a realistic phase, when the founders emulated the famous *Théâtre Libre* of Antoine in Paris.



Design by Egorof for the Moscow Art Theatre's production of *The Blue Bird*. The scene represents "The Land of Memory." (From Jacques Rouché's *L'Art Théâtral Moderne*.)

Design by Egorof for the Moscow Art Theatre's production of *The Blue Bird*. The scene represents "The Cemetery." (From Jacques Rouché's *L'Art Théâtral Moderne*.)

They were fortunate in discovering the plays of Anton Tchekov. These had been thrown aside by the regular theatres as impossible, but with them the Art Theatre made its first great successes. The tendency toward deepest realism and naturalism continued, with the works of Gorky, Ibsen, Tolstoy and Hauptmann, until the theatre became stamped as one of the foremost exponents of naturalistic doctrines. In staging, absolute imitation of natural life became the rule. There was even an attempt to provide the semblance of the fourth wall of a room at the front of the stage, and at another time four rooms were shown on the stage at once. And in historical productions every detail had to be archæologically correct. While this period of the theatre's work is now seen to be very one-sided, it served a good purpose in demolishing the old trickery and conventionality in acting, which had been left over from the romantic movement, and it showed up the faults of the old artificial methods of stage setting.

But a group of inspired artists could not long be satisfied with mere naturalism. Retaining their new quiet method of acting, the company swung to the extreme away from realism in staging. It began to search for utter conventionalization, and adopted a method of symbolism. The name of Maeterlinck now comes into the theatre's history, and the symbolistic staging of *The Blue Bird* was one of the most interesting achievements of the company. But most important among the experiments in this direction was the production of *Hamlet* with no other setting than Gordon Craig's folding screens. This production has become celebrated throughout Europe as a classic example of simplified staging.

The third phase of the theatre's work brought a return to modified realism. While the naturalistic method of staging was not revived, the purely symbolic method was set aside and realistic dramatists came into favor again. The theatre really tried to combine the two methods, attempting to interpret the realistic play spiritually. It sought to attain truth to life—but artistic and not photographic truth. While preserving the stylistic, symbolic and lyric notes, which it had learned to value in its second phase, it tried to get back to types of drama more closely related to the present world. In Tchekov's plays especially it has learned to create mood.

The acting company contains no "stars." Perfect ensemble effect is the aim of every player, and an actor who has an important part in one play may be hardly more than a "super" in the next. The theatre now has the reputation of being the

home of perhaps the best acting in Europe. Its actors are not taken from the regular theatres, but are preferably trained from youth by the Art Theatre members. A school, or "Studio," has been established for this purpose, and to make possible experiments in new methods of staging. There are no curtain-calls, no matter how successful the production has been. And the audiences are requested not to applaud at any time during the course of the play.

The managers of the theatre are very receptive in their attitude toward new ideas, as the invitation to Gordon Craig to produce *Hamlet* proves. But, on the other hand, they never accept a new idea hastily. Indeed, thoroughness is a marked characteristic of their work. The *Hamlet* production was in preparation intermittently for at least three years, and there were 150 rehearsals of *The Blue Bird.*

The theatre is organized on the repertory plan. It produces on an average fifteen plays each year, of which three or four may be new. But on account of the necessity of being self-supporting, the best productions may be kept on the stage for several weeks. The theatre seats only about 1,100 people, a happy medium between the little theatres and huge commercial theatres in this country. Its stage is properly equipped for art production, with revolving stage and other modern improvements.

The organization of the company is coöperative. The actors receive comparatively small salaries, but after five years with the theatre they share generously in its profits, which now are large. Many of the players could earn a great deal more with other theatres, but prefer the artistic advantages of a company in which they have a personal interest.

The administrative system is a model for art theatres everywhere. A board of directors, composed of artists and men of affairs specially interested in the theatre, controls the general policy. The purely artistic activities are placed in the hands of the famous director Stanislavsky, to whom the actors and other workers on the stage must be obedient, and there is a business secretary who has charge of administrative matters aside from the producing of the plays. The audiences also feel a coöperative interest in the theatre, since nearly all the seats are sold under a yearly subscription plan. Incidentally, they cost less than seats at the American theatres.

Altogether, it is probable that your little theatres can learn more from the Moscow Art Theatre than from any other in the world.

THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE

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Editorial Comment

Little Theatres and Little Critics

WHEN David Belasco writes about the failure of the little theatres, one knows what his reasons are, and how far to discount his opinions. But when a man who claims to be within the progressive group takes a notion to befoul his own nest, one wonders about his motives.

Max Parry, sometime of the Washington Square Players, and signing himself (with evident intent to deceive) as Director of the Little Theatre of Indiana, contributes to *The Theatre* an article entitled "The Failure of the Little Theatres." He fails to make his position clear, so that at the end one gathers the impression that he changed his mind while writing the essay—and forgot to strike out the contradictions. But if we are to take the title as a clue, his main thought is that the little theatre movement has failed; and he makes these specific statements: "The general impression of them all is a nightmare of bankruptcy." "Wherever we went the confidences of the directors were always of the same tenor—that they were awfully in the hole, that they were having a fearful time holding the players together, that the local public wasn't supporting them properly, and that they were feeling around for the most graceful way to close things up."

We have no intention of defending the little theatres as a group against the single charge of mismanagement. We are aware that many of the non-commercial playhouses have neglected, and even scorned, common sense in business management, and financial failure has occasionally resulted. But we do feel that a critic is absolutely unwarranted in suggesting that the whole movement is a failure on that account.

In the first place, anyone who knows the field thoroughly can name many little theatres that have been successful even in Mr. Parry's purely commercial interpretation of the word. He overlooks, for instance, the Arts and Crafts Theatre; and we note that the Cincinnati and Indianapolis groups are in the list of those to which he implies absolute failure—although reliable reports show both to be in healthy financial condition.

From a wider standpoint, moreover, the little theatres have been remarkably successful in the only accomplishment we have a right to ask of them—in pioneering in the field of a real art of the theatre. When people start out to

pioneer in a new land, many may fall by the way. But if enough stick to pave the way for permanent institutions, the movement is considered successful.

Mr. Parry has argued from an incomplete set of facts to a sweeping conclusion that is false when judged by permanent values. If he had considered the matter from the standpoint of art, he would have seen that the little theatre movement is the most important activity in the American theatre to-day. It has succeeded in shaking the business monopoly in a way that seemed impossible five years ago, and it is forcing a complete realignment of those working in the dramatic field: on the one side, the theatre speculators, busied with the amusement business; and on the other, the artists, the innovators and the drama-lovers (amateurs, in the original sense) who wish to sweep the accumulated rubbish out of the theatre building, and then to restore it more nearly in the form of a temple. These amateurs are laying foundations on which will be built native producing companies in scattered cities all over the land; they are building toward a permanent, collective American art theatre. In this work they should be secure from misunderstanding and destructive criticism within their own ranks.

The American Voice and the Actor

WAS it Yvette Guilbert who asked, apparently naïvely, whether the American voice was in the nose or in the throat? The question suggests two disagreeable truths about the theatre in this country: first, that the average American actor assails the audience's ears with an unlovely approximation of his lines, so that we have ceased to look for beauty of speech on the stage; and second, that he is not sufficiently a student of his art to know that there is a difference between lines as usually spoken and lines musically spoken—and one may even question seriously whether *he* knows the respective purposes of the nose and the throat.

The actor is not alone in his guilt. Slovenly speech is a national vice. On the street as in the college, in the shop as on the stage, harsh and feeble voices and careless enunciation prevail.

For any lasting relief it seems necessary to go back to sources and to train children—in the schools, perhaps—to use their voices properly. It certainly is not more important that they learn how to use a Latin subjunctive correctly, or how to compute the area of a circle, than it is to make their way of speaking a joy to the listener instead of an annoyance to every cultured ear. But before teaching the students it is necessary that someone teach the teachers. Our memory of those who presided over school and college classrooms covers an ungodly medley of shrill, raucous voices, and timid mutterings punctuated by catarrhal noises. No school or college, so far as we know, has yet made clean, musical speech a qualification for admission to its faculty. Where, then, shall the good work begin?

Out in Berkeley, California, we have seen a notable experiment in this direction. There Mrs. John Howell has established a children's theatre that is unique. We saw its presentation of parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There was no possibility of such a production being carried by story-interest or emotional effect. But what it lacked in plot and dramatic tension was more than compensated for by the beauty of speech and grace of movement of the children on the stage. Not only had these players caught the rhythm of Shakespeare's poetry, but their voices were beautifully modulated, so that the speaking of the lines was truly a concert of sound. Their movements on the stage, moreover, were characterized by dignity, poise and a sense for rhythm.

Such results are not attained through the usual hasty methods, or without expert guidance. It was no surprise to learn that no one of these child-actors had been allowed to appear on the stage until after two years of training in voice use and movement. In other words, the public appearance was an incident of the work and not its object.

In order further to guard against the playing up of personality, the names of performers do not appear on the program, and there are no flowers and no curtain-calls. If any player takes a notion to act the star, or to become self-conscious in portraying a rôle, there follows a quick transfer to a minor part. The director thus rids the theatre of the worst faults of the personality-ridden stage of grown-up people.

Mrs. Howell's work starts at the right end, with thorough training of voice and body; and she has been phenomenally successful in instilling into her child-players a feeling for felicitous expression and spontaneous rhythm of movement. Her achievement carries hope for us all. We believe that she is starting in one community an institution which should have its counterpart wherever beauty is valued. From such beginnings the work should spread to the colleges and even to the public schools. Then when a generation of young people has been led to value clean and musical enunciation and poise of body, all things will be possible — even that beauty of speech again will find place on the professional stage.

The Task of Jacques Copeau

WE LOOK with uneasy speculation, if not with alarm, at the announcement of the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier*, the new French theatre that is to open its first season in New York in November. We have the utmost confidence in the artistic ideals and practical ability of Jacques Copeau, the director; but we wonder if he has allowed his backers to mislead him into a project in which he will be unduly limited. In the first place, he binds himself to put on a new play each week, which means productions as hasty as those of our commercial stock theatres. And second — to put it rawly — he has the wrong crowd back of him. The people behind the project — their names appear in large type in the prospectus — are largely the reactionaries and society leaders who lend such glitter (and much gold) to the Metropolitan Opera.

We had marked Copeau as the one Frenchman who saw most clearly that the old French ideal of a theatre production as a social event must be destroyed. And now we see his first American venture initiated with the parading of social names, and with high prices. Can his simplified methods of staging, his no-star, unpretentious acting, and his ideal of a democratic art be squared with the ideals and demands of his patrons? We shall watch the experiment with interest.

About Our Subscribers

IF OUR subscription lists indicate even roughly the real centers of the progressive spirit in the theatres of this country, Philadelphia is proven to be the original home of conservatism. We have just one subscriber in that one-time home of little-theatre activity. And yet a city of one-thirtieth the size, Berkeley, gives us more than thirty subscribers. Naturally, New York and Detroit, our home city, give us our largest support. But Chicago, which should by all signs be our third best patron, is very near the end of the list, with only eight subscribers—which is both disgraceful and intolerable. Cambridge has many more than Boston, and St. Paul nearly twice as many as Minneapolis. Oregon provides as many

subscriptions as all the Southern states combined; and California nearly twice as many as the whole of New England. Indianapolis and Milwaukee have no interest in what we have to offer, but little places like Northampton and Montclair treat us handsomely. Such are the indications of progressivism as our circulation manager sees them.

And by the way, it is subscription money that makes our existence possible. We feel that we have found a distinct place in the dramatic world, and we have no intention of giving up the good work. But if each of those who have written us so enthusiastically would turn appreciation into material help—if each, for instance, would send us two new subscriptions for friends (or enemies)—our place would immediately be secure, and we could realize plans for enlargement. We promise certain improvements in the second year: prompt issues, more complete news of the progressive theatres, and a wider range of essays. But we cannot go further without greater coöperation in gaining subscribers. If you think our work is worth while, please do your part. By introducing us to those interested in the art of the theatre, you will be doing them and us a distinct service.

The Art Theatre and Repertory

IT IS a good sign that repertory is being discussed by both the commercial theatre people and the progressive groups, even if little actual progress has been made in capturing the ideal. The American art theatre when it comes will be a repertory theatre. It may modify the repertory plan as followed in such institutions as the Comédie Française, retaining a certain latitude in the length of run of a successful new play. But it should never present less than a certain scheduled number of plays in a season; and it must gradually build up a group of plays for revival, covering classic and modern works. Only thus can it fulfill its true function as an institution serving a community in relation to theatre art as the art gallery serves it in relation to painting and sculpture.

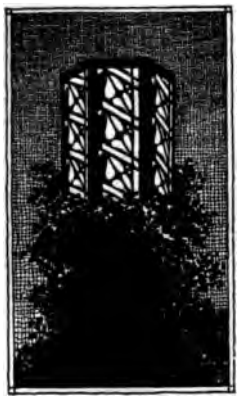
Repertory organization brings its serious problems, particularly where there is competition with the commercial long-run system. But only through its advantages, its method of conserving the best plays out of the theatres of the past and the present, can we hope to combat effectively the narrowing influence of the business theatre.

"The drama is the mirror of life if not something more. And an age that paints its woodwork red to ape mahogany, that makes respected fortunes by mixing up sulphuric acid with glucose and calling the product beer, the age of flannelette and the patent pill . . . . such an age may well have such a drama as will be pleasant and acceptable to the doers of these things; for when insincerity has once raised up its honored head in politics and commerce, as it has, and in daily life as well, it is quite certain that its worshippers will demand a drama sufficiently stale and smug to suit their lives. . . . .

"The kind of drama that we most need to-day seems to me to be the kind that will build new worlds for the fancy, for the spirit as much as the body sometimes needs a change of scene. . . . .

"It seems to me that a play that is true to fancy is as true as one that is true to modern times, for fancy is quite as real as more solid things and every bit as necessary to a man."—LORD DUNSANY, in *The National Review*.

Playing with Light—IV. The permanent setting at the Madison Theatre, Detroit, designed by Sam Hume. The theatre is now used for moving pictures; but the photograph shows, better than any other we have seen, the subtle light effects possible with a modification of the cupola-horizon or plaster background. (Photograph by Frank Scott Clark.)



The photograph above shows Claude Bragdon's light screens as seen at the *Song and Light Festival* in New York City, 1916. Below is a drawing of one of the lanterns. On page 192 are drawings, by Claude Bragdon, showing impressions of the lighting at the New York and Rochester festivals.

Artificial Lighting for Out-of-Doors

By Claude Bragdon

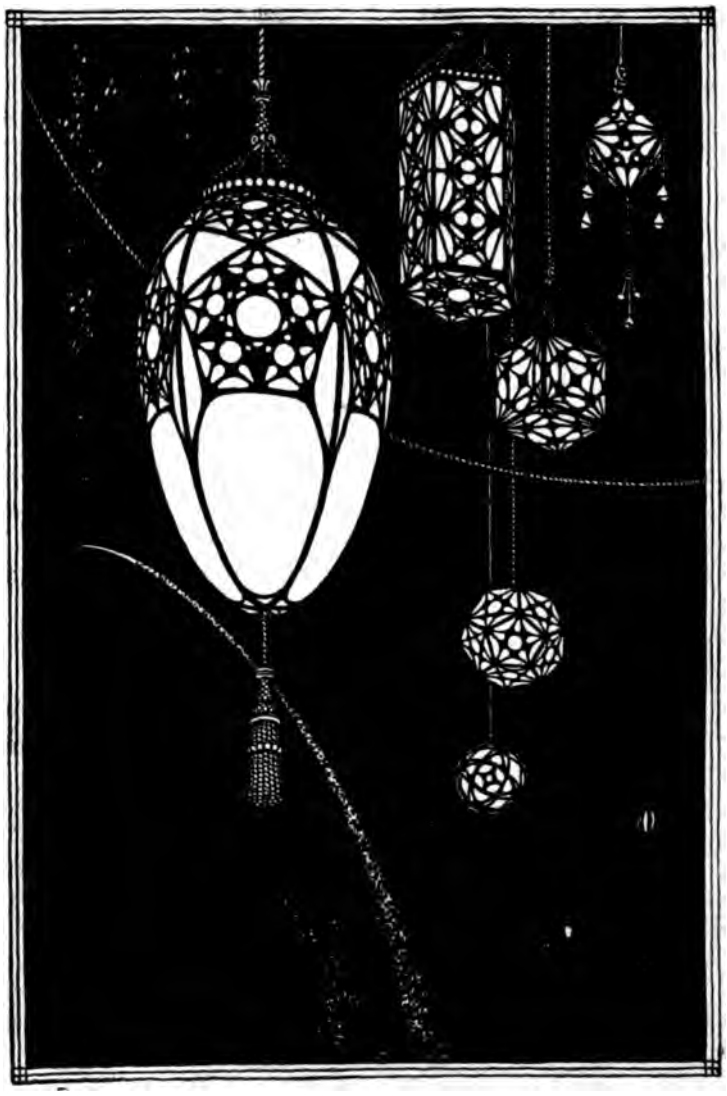
The problem of lighting evening performances out-of-doors is one which has received scant attention. Aside from the possibilities latent in flood-lighting, some of which have been more or less successfully developed and used, there are no well-formulated and thoroughly tested systems such as exist for the indoor stage. My own experiments in this field have proved so personally enthralling and so popularly successful that at the request of the editor I shall endeavor to describe them here.

The first of these experiments arose from a simple practical necessity: that of giving a chorus of some three hundred people, in a sylvan setting, enough light by which to read their music, and at the same time protect the eyes of the audience from glare. Gas was the only means of illumination available, and imposed conditions which were met in the most direct and economical way.

Between the audience and the chorus—corresponding to what in a theatre would be the proscenium arch—two uprights were erected, supporting a long horizontal member which projected at either end. This framework was of three-inch gas pipe, and fed five powerful gas lamps, such as are used for lighting stores. In front of each lamp was hung a rectangular glass screen, white on the side toward the chorus, and on the side toward the audience showing an intricate design in line and color, reminiscent of stained glass. The backs of these screens acted as reflectors, while seen from the front they saved and satified the eye.

To mitigate the harshness of the iron frame, and to bring it into harmony with the trees and grass, smilax and asparagus wreathed it round. To destroy confusing shadows, and to give more light far back, some colored Japanese lanterns were hung from the branches which spread above the heads of the chorus.

The whole arrangement was not only highly efficient and effective, but was unexpectedly and inexpressibly beautiful as well. The mellow gaslight bathing the white-clad choristers in radiance, lost itself, as in a Watteau picture, in a penumbra of darkness fretted at its edges by the intricate lacework of the leaves. Sharply defined against this brightness the smouldering radiance of the multi-colored screens cast on the beholder an almost hypnotic spell, so that the music had its own sweet way in the stilled soul.



Lanterns designed by Claude Bragdon in four-dimensional ornament, for use at open-air productions. Reproduced from *Projective Ornament*, by courtesy of the Manas Press.

Later in the summer of 1915, and again in 1916, in a virgin hollow among the hills of Rochester's most beautiful park, I was given an opportunity to develop this system of lighting on a large scale, using electricity. In place of the iron framework above described, four poles were erected, connected at the top by means of a cable which supported the lights and glass shields. These were larger, of bolder design and richer coloring, and there were nine of them instead of five—circles alternating with rectangles. In color they followed the rainbow sequence, from red at one end to violet at the other, each individual screen constituting what may be described as a color-chord; that is, worked in with the principal color were its "overtones"—the third, the fifth, and the minor seventh of a definite color scale. Along the front of the orchestra platform was a fringe of trees, palms and potted plants, and the poles and wires were heavily garlanded with arbor-vitæ—the idea of a proscenium or frame being definitely developed. The valley was lit by several thousand small Japanese lanterns hung on the bushes, and a number of especially designed big lanterns placed high aloft in the largest trees. The hard white glare of such permanent park lights as afflicted the eye was translated into color chords by means of glass screens on the side facing the spectator. The whole effect was as of some garden of enchantment remote from the work-a-day world in time and space. The design of the screens and lanterns contributed to this effect of utter strangeness, for their patterns savored of nothing known or familiar, being developed from the geometry of four-dimensional space.

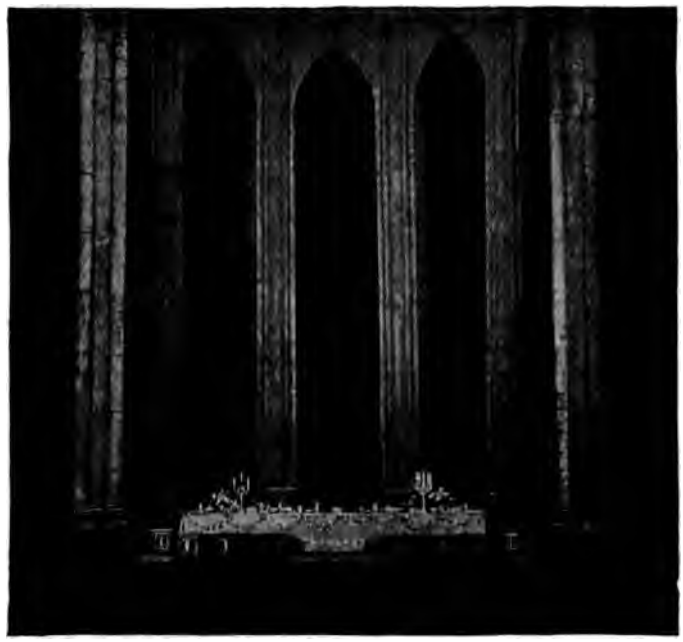
The third embodiment of my idea, on the thirteenth of September of last year, developed new features, and these had their root, as before, in practical necessity. The occasion was the first out-of-door concert of the New York Community Chorus; the place was that part of Central Park at the termination of the Mall, immediately surrounding the lake, opposite the Bethesda Fountain. The proscenium lights, arranged as in the Rochester event, appeared here to be poised in air, being suspended from an almost invisible cable stretched between two trees. On account of the size of the chorus, and to counteract the shadows, several flood-lights supplemented this proscenium lighting, each screened with colored glass on the side toward the audience.

As the site afforded no level space for the accommodation of the orchestra, a platform had to be built out over the water, and as this was forward of the line of the proscenium, other means had to be devised to give light to the musicians, conductors and

soloists. So a black pylon was erected at each outer corner, supporting a large hexagonal lantern from the interior of which a flood-light was directed diagonally inward and downward, bathing the platform in light. Just underneath the conductor's stand, with its lower edge almost touching the water, was a circular lighted shield, tilted a trifle forward, so that the light was deflected upward, throwing into strong relief the white-clad figure of Mr. Barnhart, the conductor. This shield and the two pylon lanterns, forming an inverted triangle, yielded the primary color-chord of red, yellow and blue. Above and behind them glowed the rising line of proscenium lights, and this whole composition, reflected in the still water of the lake, made a pattern incomparably colorful and rich.

The lake was outlined by Japanese lanterns; as in Rochester, large lanterns adorned the tops of the tall trees; the city lights surrounding the fountain were disguised as great lanterns atop of square black pylons; and every park light within the radius of vision was translated into color and pattern by means of paper cylinders supported on wire frames.

That the city had never before witnessed anything as beautiful as this festival of Song and Light, the New York papers were unanimous in declaring, and they but voiced the opinion of the sixty or eighty thousand persons who were in attendance. And yet to me, to-day, it seems only the first faltering beginning of a new art of color and light; an art which will speak new truths of the spirit in a language of new beauty — an art no longer static like these, its earlier manifestations, but mobile, as music is mobile, waxing, waning, changing from grave to gay, from calm to storm, dramatic in the highest sense, surcharged with terror, mystery and enchantment, but divinely beautiful in all its moods and moments. May not this be the art *par excellence* of the theatre, and ought not every sincere worker in the theatre to do his part toward developing this art?



Playing with Light—V. Setting for *Everyman*, as produced at the Dresden Opera House. Designed by Adolph Linnebach. From H. K. Moderwell's *The Theatre of Today*, by courtesy of John Lane Company.

Playing with Light—VI. Design by Golovine for Act III of Gluck's *Orpheus*, produced at the Imperial Opera House, Petrograd. From H. K. Moderwell's *The Theatre of Today*, by courtesy of John Lane Company.

Playing with Light

AMONG all the improvements brought by the so-called new stage-craft, none has been more revolutionary and more far-reaching in effect than that of stage lighting. There was a time when the producer's only concern was to get *enough* light—and usually he got a great deal too much, resulting in that glare which has been a curse of American staging. But of late years the artists of the theatre have discovered the great emotional and decorative possibilities of lighting, and one hears much about "light values" and "light composition."

In the best modern staging, lighting is revealed as a harmonizing and unifying force, bringing the action and setting into definite relationship. Light is manipulated to induce concentration—not in the sense of focusing attention on the star actor (as the producer used to pick out a favorite with a "spot"), but in the sense of centering the stage picture and holding the action together in a single zone of interest. But further than that, lighting is being made to serve a definite *dramatic* purpose. It is made to follow every changing mood of the story, and to reënforce the action by its emotional effect upon the spectator. By its color, its tone, and its modelling in line and mass, it expresses subtleties of feeling which never else could be captured on the stage.

And finally, lighting has been made a primary means to decorative effect. Bursts of light are played against masses of shadow, brilliant groups of figures are set in relief against half-lost backgrounds, and mysterious corridors of light lead between towering walls of darkness. In contrast with these huge effects, a lamp may be placed to tinge the edge of an actor's robe, in order to balance the pictorial composition.

In bringing together in this issue six illustrations of the modern producer's tendency to play with light, we wish to suggest the wealth of decorative value which can be achieved with lights used against the simplest of stage backgrounds. In the frontispiece plate there is no "scene" in the usual sense. A group of figures merely stand out in relief against a lighted curtain—and yet the production has been described as one of the most "decorative" staged in recent years. In the *Orpheus* design, on the page opposite, fine use is made of two opposed masses of dark and light. From the plate showing the Madison Theatre setting (page 187) one may gain a fairly good impression of the exquisite quality of light obtainable with the use of a plaster-wall background. The decorative beauty of the other scenes speaks for itself.

News and Comment

Caliban at Boston

Caliban by the Yellow Sands, which Percy MacKaye wrote for the Shakespeare Tercentenary in New York last year, was recently played in the stadium of Harvard University for the benefit of the Red Cross and R. O. T. C. So great was the public demand that the masque ran for three weeks, from July 2 to July 21. The cast of the principal characters was nearly the same as in New York: *Caliban*, Lionel Braham; *Ariel*, Gareth Hughes; *Prospero*, Howard Kyle; *Miranda*, however, was played by Miss Alexandra Carlisle. Frederick Stanhope was the director.

The chief innovation in the mechanism of the stage was a very high arched proscenium for the inner scenes (instead of the rectangular frame at New York), backed by a lofty horizon-dome constructed of plaster. To fit this new stage Robert E. Jones designed new settings, making use of the great height to achieve beautiful panel decorations. The lights thrown upon the dome created impressive vistas of sky—deep blue in the garden scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, gray-green in the platform scene of *Hamlet*, red in the Harfleur scene of *Henry V.*

To conceal the shifting of scenery, a gigantic steam curtain was employed, upon which colored lights were spectacularly thrown. This theatrical geyser was advertised as a "feature," and probably helped to draw the crowd. But owing to its startling noise, and its uncertain veering on windy nights, this histrionic Old Faithful impaired the illusion of Prospero's magic visions, and often drenched the Muses.

The performance as a whole was more compact and swift than in New York, and more intelligible to those who had not gone through "intensive training" in the allegorical book of the play. It was gratifying to see again the brilliant costumes which in color and pattern Mr. Jones devised to carry a long distance. The dances executed under the general direction of Miss Virginia Tanner were one of the most successful parts of the production. The lighting was, as a rule, insufficient: one missed the hand of Urban. FRANK CHENEY HERSEY.

The National Sylvan Theatre

THE dedication of the National Sylvan Theatre at Washington took place on June second. This new open-air theatre, situated directly southeast of Washington Monument, deserves attention because it is the first theatre owned by the United States Government. It owes its existence largely to the efforts of Mrs. Christian Hemmick. Seeing the possibilities of the location and realizing that each year there was a surplus left from the funds appropriated by Congress for the upkeep and improvement of the park system of the capital city, she induced the Superintendent of Grounds, Colonel William H. Harts, to arrange for the construction of the theatre. The result, thus far, leaves much to be desired, both from a practical and artistic viewpoint. But its projectors hope that this modest sylvan stage will eventually lead to the establishment in Washington of a government-owned and -operated theatre, comparable to the theatres to be found in some of the European countries.

The opening performance on June 2nd, entitled *The Drama Triumphant*, divided into three parts—the birth, the degradation, and the triumph of the drama—defies description as a masterpiece of either play-making or pageantry. The argument, such as it was, served chiefly as a vehicle for the introduction of a number of more or less well-known dancers, actors, and grand-

opera singers, including Andreas Pavey, Serge Oukrainsky, Izetta Jewel, James K. Hackett, Katheryn Lee, Sophie Braslau, and Mme. Tamaki Miura, the Japanese prima donna. The Florence Fleming Noyes Rhythmic Dancers, led by Grace Cowie, opened the program with a dance-pantomime entitled "The Dawn of the Drama," and their offering surpassed by far all the other numbers in artistic value and beauty, and in appropriateness to the subject, occasion and setting. The performance was concluded by the reading of a letter of dedication from Mme. Sarah Bernhardt.

A number of other performances have been given in the theatre during the summer. In June *Ingomar* was presented, and also a play especially for children. On July 13th a masque entitled *The Call of the Allies* was given. It is also planned to have concerts in the theatre. The seats are free to the public.

RICHARD SILVESTER.

Stock at Its Best

THE series of seven productions given by the Modern Players, under the direction of George Foster Platt, at the Pabst Theatre in Milwaukee during the summer, was undoubtedly the most important "stock" experiment undertaken in this country during the last decade. Certainly no other professional company has attempted to show so many plays of unquestionable merit in a theatre of the commercial type.

The list of productions is as follows: (1) *The Lady with the Dagger*, *The Farewell Supper*, and *The Green Cockatoo*, by Schnitzler; (2) Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*; (3) *The Lost Silk Hat*, *The Glittering Gate*, and *The Queen's Enemies*, by Lord Dunsany, and *The Farewell Supper* by Schnitzler; (4) Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan*; (5) Wedekind's *Such is Life*; (6) Galsworthy's *The Pigeon*; (7) Fulda's *The Pirate*. The company, which was chosen from those who would prove both sympathetic to such a project and versatile, was composed chiefly of players brought by the director from New York. The staging included some interesting experiments in the newer methods, among which the stylistic settings by J. Blanding Sloan were notable.

The project was heralded as an attempt to establish a repertory theatre, and if Mr. Platt can make his venture permanent, and still keep his play-list so free from the average American journalistic play and other mere fillers, he will do an historic service to the American theatre. For the salvation of the stage in this country doubtless lies in the establishment of a series of independent repertory theatres with resident companies under enlightened artist-directors.

S. R.

Fooling with Repertory

THE word repertory is being bandied back and forth by many an actor and manager in the commercial theatre, but usually with little understanding of its true meaning. A real repertory theatre provides for preparation of a series of plays in such thorough fashion, and by a company so firmly established, that these plays can be revived at intervals without those indications of haste and carelessness which characterize American stock productions. Grace George, for instance, seems to misunderstand the word. She is to return to New York with a "repertory season" similar to her successful one of two years ago, but all her announced plays are new.

Margaret Anglin will open a so-called repertory season in New York with a dramatization of Emerson Hough's novel, *The Beautiful Gate*. But we look in vain for an announcement of revivals of her successful classic productions.

Ethel Barrymore has announced that she will appear in five plays, which will be the foundation of a permanent repertory. They are *Camille*, *The School for Scandal*, *Captain Jinks*, *Mid-Channel*, and a new play by Edward Sheldon, called *The Bridge of Sighs*. The staging will be under the direction of Iden Payne, which makes the venture the more promising.

A more hopeful sign is that which comes from Stuart Walker, well known as inventor and director of the Portmanteau Theatre. He directed a stock theatre venture at Indianapolis during the summer, scoring a financial success, but with a list of plays that left much to be desired, pieces of the type of *Officer 666* and *Broadway Jones* predominating. The season opened the way, however, to a repertory theatre project at Indianapolis. Mr. Walker found such coöperation that plans are on foot to convert the Propylæum into a theatre to be directed by him under the repertory plan. As he owns American rights to several of the best Dunsany plays, and other important ones, we supposed that he would lift the project above the mere amusement level established at Indianapolis this summer.

Even if all these ventures fail to become permanent, it is a sign of progress that so many leaders in the commercial theatre have recognized that the best results cannot be obtained with either the long-run traveling-company system or the over-hasty stock system. Repertory is being recognized as an ideal, even if its successful attainment is still far off. S. C.

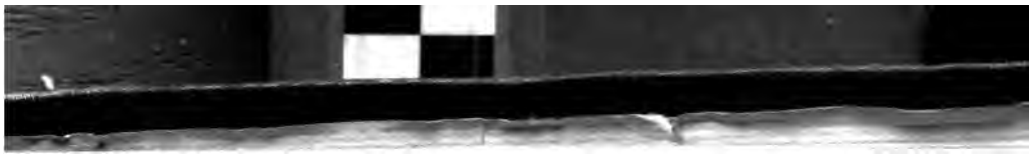
The Wisconsin Players enter upon their eighth season with plans for widening their already broad activities. Experiments and classes in all branches of stage work, lectures and trial productions will continue at the workshop and clubhouse in Milwaukee. Selections from the repertory of the Players, including foreign, American and local plays, will be presented at home and on tour. The organization will open a three-weeks' engagement at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York on October 20. A second volume of *Wisconsin Plays* will appear in October, under the imprint of B. W. Huebsch.

Adolf Bolm, the Russian dancer who became known throughout this country during his tour with the Diaghleff Russian Ballet last year, has gathered a notable group of artists for the presentation of his choreodramas and *ballets-intime*. Among his associates are Roshanara, Michio Itow and Ratan Devi; and among those entrusted with preparation of costumes and settings are Willy Pogany, Livingston Platt and John Wenger. The initial showing was scheduled for two weeks at the Booth Theatre in New York during August.

Joseph Urban has been commissioned to design and execute settings for three productions at the Metropolitan Opera House.

The Theatre Workshop of New York has given a number of performances during the summer, including a series at the Building of Arts, Bar Harbor. Its repertory now includes Dunsany's *The Tents of the Arabs*, Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, Browning's *In a Balcony*, Sutro's *A Marriage Has Been Arranged*, Barrie's *The Twelve Pound Look*, Rita Wellman's *Barbarians*, Alice Gerstenberg's *The Pot Boiler*, and *The Infanta*, a dramatization by Astrid Kimball of a story by Oscar Wilde.

The annual "mountain play" was presented in the Mountain Theatre on Mount Tamalpais, near San Francisco, May 20, when Holberg's *Jeppe-on-the-Hill* was produced. The production was repeated in the Greek Theatre at Berkeley on July 7.



The Stage Society of Philadelphia will open its season in October with Lawrence Housman's *The Chinese Lantern*. Its announced list of plays includes a notable collection of works by Shaw, Barker, Masefield, Dunsany, Galsworthy, Maeterlinck aud others.

The Washington Square Players will not open their regular season until October, when they will present the first of a series of five productions. Many of the members of the company, however, will be seen in *The Family Exit*, a play by Lawrence Langner, which will be presented at the Comedy Theatre in September. As usual, there will be special productions during the year for subscribers only.

At the Little Theatres

REPORTS from little theatre directors throughout the country indicate that the war is playing havoc with the amateur and experimental theatre groups. In some cases the work is being abandoned for the period of hostilities, and in nearly all there has been a curtailment of plans for the coming season. The Denver Little Theatre, of which Granville F. Sturgis was director, has disbanded its company, and goes out of existence without any plans for the future. The Prairie Playhouse at Galesburg, one of the most important experimental ventures in the country, has lost its director and many members of the company. An attempt will be made to reopen the theatre in the fall with amateur players under volunteer directors from the Drama League. After producing *Prunella*, which had been announced for last spring, the new group will offer "light and entertaining plays, believing that is what the public will most appreciate." Such are the horrors of war.

The Artists Guild of St. Louis, which last year leased its little theatre to an outside company, with unsatisfactory results, will have its own company this season. Irving Pichel has been engaged as director, and he will produce five plays, or groups of plays, beginning in October.

The Players' Workshop of Chicago, which last May completed a year's successful work under the direction of Elizabeth Bingham, will not reopen this season. Only new plays by Chicago authors were produced, and the theatre proved its value as a laboratory for local playwrights; and it helped to develop the talents of a really notable scenic designer, J. Blanding Sloan. A number of members of the organization have leased the theatre in the Fine Arts Building formerly occupied by the Chicago Little Theatre, and will continue producing under the name "The Playshop." The final bill of the Players' Workshop, produced late in May, was as follows: *The Myth of the Mirror*, adapted by Gretchen Riggs; *How Very Shocking!* by Julian Thompson; *No Sabe*, by Elisha Cook; and *The Pot Boiler*, by Alice Gerstenberg.

A little theatre has been established at Honolulu. It will present a series of plays during the coming season, under the leadership of Mrs. Roger Noble Burnham. The building, which seats 160 people, is unique among little theatres, the auditorium having no side walls, due to the warmth of the climate.

The Players Club of San Francisco produced as the last bill of the spring season, at its Little Theatre, the following one-act plays: *The Tongmen* by Adolph Lehmann, *The Infernal Triangle* by Benjamin Purrington, *The*

[illegible] brought out a curious comedy of Ethiopia [illegible] presented at the [illegible] Theatre at [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] known as [illegible] and [illegible] after the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] will [illegible] in December [illegible] productions will [illegible] the Little Theatre during the year.

The Little [illegible] Company of [illegible], which is directed by Helen [illegible], will [illegible] [illegible] performances [illegible] [illegible] production will be [illegible] [illegible] beginning [illegible] October [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] little theatre [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the little [illegible] Company. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] under the direction of [illegible].

The Chicago Little Theatre will devote [illegible] during its sixth season, more than ever before, to research and experiment in the arts of the theatre. The public performances will be made an incidental part of the company's work rather than its first consideration. The [illegible] activities of the season are announced as class work, rehearsals and experimental productions. The original home of the Theatre in the Fine Arts Building has been vacated. A series of public performances will be given, however, in auditoriums specially [illegible] for the occasions, the first production being scheduled at Central Music Hall during the week beginning November [illegible]. The plays will be from the permanent repertory of the Theatre, including such notable productions as *Medea*, *[illegible] of the [illegible]*, [illegible] and *The [illegible]*. The Company plans a tour to include New York City later in the season.

The [illegible] Players presented in June at the little theatre on the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Charles [illegible] [illegible] at West Orange, New Jersey, *The Sire de Maletroit's Door* dramatized by [illegible] [illegible] Walker from Stevenson's story, and *The [illegible]*, a masque by Ethel [illegible].

The Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit will open early in November with the first of a series of six productions. Sam Hume will again be director.

The [illegible] [illegible] Players have given three productions during the summer at the theatre on the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Aldis. The August bill was as follows: *The Man in the Stalls* by Alfred Sutro, *[illegible]* by Mary Aldis and *The Twelve Pound Look* by J. M. Barrie. Owing to the war uncertainty plans for the fall have not yet been announced.

New Books About the Theatre

The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, by Ernest A. Boyd. This volume is a real contribution to the history of the progressive movement in the theatre. It is concerned almost exclusively with those "outsiders"—literary writers and amateurs—who have made Irish drama and the name of the Irish Players known throughout the world. The author's judgments are sound, and the volume is exceptionally well written. If the method is a bit controversial at times, one must remember that the Irish National Theatre has not yet passed all its stages, nor settled all its questions of policy — and a writer who is human must take sides. Altogether it is a book that the stu-

dent of the modern theatre must read, and a volume remarkably suggestive for those interested in the non-commercial theatre in this country. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.25.)

How to Produce Amateur Plays, by Barrett A. Clark, is an unusually good book of its kind, but very elementary. It is designed to be a practical manual, and as such it should be valuable to school societies and dramatic clubs. The chapter on settings is the best thing of the sort yet written for amateur producers, and the play-lists are valuable for reference. But in leaving out a chapter on standards of acting, the author has made his volume inferior in at least one respect to a recent volume on the same subject. The book should be in every school library, and we recommend it to amateurs for serious study. All others will find a mere skimming sufficient. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.50.)

Bottoms Up, by George Jean Nathan, is a volume of fragments, chiefly about the theatre, in which the author attempts "an application of the slapstick to satire." The result is clever and entertaining at times: at others only slightly amusing and smart. The volume seems to mark the passing of an original thinker, who might have been a brilliant writer, into the ranks of those who sacrifice truth and judgment in the pursuit of humor or epigram. (New York: Philip Goodman Company.)

The American Dramatist, by Montrose J. Moses. Only by including much material not properly pertaining to the title-subject, and much material about authors not ultimately important, could a writer hope to make a four-hundred-page book about the American dramatist. But while one finds considerable padding in this revised edition of Montrose Moses' work (first published in 1911), there remains a surprisingly large amount of material that is important as historical background, and not a little that stimulates the reader to thought about the true function of the theatre, and its possibilities in relation to American cultural life. The volume is scholarly enough, and sufficiently well written, to remain the standard work in its limited field. We cannot recommend it for thorough reading except to those who wish to study American drama in its minutiæ. But everyone should skim through it judiciously; and it should be on the reference shelves of every dramatic library. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.75.)

Projective Ornament, by Claude Bragdon. In this little book one of America's most original artists insists upon the need of a mathematical basis for the free-flowing forms of ornament, and he uncovers a universal source in four-dimensional geometry. One finds here a description of the methods employed in designing the light-shields of which Mr. Bragdon writes elsewhere in this issue. But the book goes deeper than the mere analysis of an individual scheme of ornament; for the artist, it strikes back to original sources and opens up a rich field for experiment. It reveals the author as an artist who has outgrown the "borrowings and survivals" with which most of his colleagues are concerned—as a deep thinker and original worker. The volume does not make easy reading; but he who persists will find it richly informative and finely stimulating. (Rochester: The Manas Press. $2.50.)

The New Published Plays

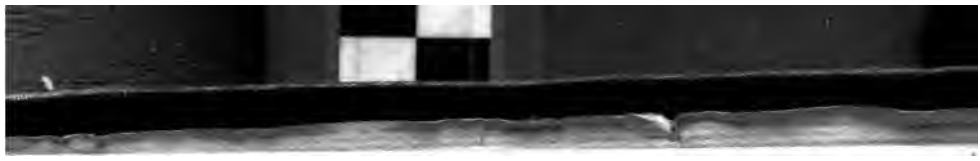
PLAYS OF GODS AND MEN, by Lord Dunsany. This volume is, of course, the most important dramatic publication of the quarter. While the collection marks no advance over the earlier *Five Plays*, it proves again Lord Dunsany's right to a place among the foremost living dramatists. The most effective play in the book, the now famous *A Night at an Inn*, had already appeared as a pamphlet, and has been reviewed in these columns. Of the other three, the poetic *The Tents of the Arabs* and the more dramatic but less beautiful *The Queen's Enemies* are already known to the American public through scattered performances, and are happily still available for production by non-commercial theatre groups. The only new play, the three-act *The Laughter of the Gods*, seems like an only partially successful attempt to combine the poetic quality of *The Tents of the Arabs* with the dramatic effectiveness of that finest of all Dunsany's works, *The Gods of the Mountain*. It is imaginative, it combines beautifully rhythmic prose with an interesting legend, and it achieves something of the breathless quality of the "static drama" of Maeterlinck; but it lacks the directness, the definite characterizations and the sheer dramatic force of *The Gods of the Mountain*. The volume is, nevertheless, one that every library and lover of the drama must have. (Boston: Luce and Company. $1.50.)

PLOTS AND PLAYWRIGHTS, by Edward Massey. Except that it satirizes the methods of the pot-boiling Broadway playwright, this comedy does not rise appreciably above the average of the successful Broadway play. It proved to be a drawing card when presented by the Washington Square Players, but it was doubtless the melodramatic effectiveness of the piece, rather than the satire, that made it popular. For while making fun of the trickery behind the typical New York play, the author relies on that trickery and novelty for his own most potent appeal. In three scenes one sees three passively dramatic episodes, while in a fourth one sees how a "successful" playwright makes appealing melodrama out of the same characters and situations. The play is entertaining as *Seven Keys to Baldpate* and *On Trial* were entertaining. It is novel, clever and effective; but it shows no sense of literary values. If it is produced by other progressive groups merely for its entertainment value, it will demand something substantially worth while on the same bill by way of balance. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.00.)

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD, by Thomas Wood Stevens, a masque bearing the subtitle "A Pageant for the Present Hour," is evidently intended to stimulate American patriotism and recruiting. The enthusiasm of popular prejudice may bring it some success as a masque of occasion; but its cataloguing of the virtues of the Allies, with all the villianies grouped on the other side, is a bit obvious. Art has a higher (and usually unexpressed) justice of its own, and scorns partisanship; and so we put this down as too clearly a purpose-piece. Its verse is remarkably fine in spots, and from first to last is well above the masque-writer's average. It is a pleasure to note, too, that the author does not slop over emotionally, even when he treats of Armenia and the Lusitania. But after all, it is more politics than art. (Chicago: The Stage Guild.)

TRIFLES, by Susan Glasspell. This is a tense, compact little play, and one of the best one-act pieces yet written by an American. It is realistic in method, and is unrelieved by humor of any sort; but the tragedy is suggested rather than portrayed, and the characterizations are vivid enough, and the dramatic action tense enough, to "carry" the production. It has already been played by many of the progressive groups, and should be known to every worker in the non-commercial theatre. (New York: Frank Shay. 35c.)

PORTMANTEAU PLAYS, by Stuart Walker. The forty-page introduction, written by Edward Hale Bierstadt, is the most interesting and valuable part of this book. In it one finds biographical material about Stuart Walker,



critical estimates of his plays, and an account of the invention and activities of the Portmanteau Theatre. The four plays collected in the volume are of a sort that sometimes seems to be unmitigated bosh, but which, if it catches one in the right mood, seems delicately and pleasingly fanciful. When we read the first two, *The Trimplet* and *Nevertheless*, we leaned toward the bosh theory. The former, which Mr. Bierstadt terms "unquestionably Mr. Walker's finest play," is a purely symbolic piece, in which the author's poetic diction is by no means equal to the demands of his imagination. *Nevertheless* is a trifle built on the stock situation of two children and a burglar. *The Medicine Show* is the slightest sort of farcical character-study. *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* goes far to redeem the preceding plays, having both substance and fantasy. It marks the way in which we hope to see Mr. Walker develop. In the others, in an effort to achieve child-like simplicity, he has come perilously near to being merely childish. It is refreshing, nevertheless, to receive a book of American plays in a fanciful vein. And of course the volume is worth having as a document in the history of the progressive movement. (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company. $1.50.)

THE SUBLIME SACRIFICE, by Charles V. H. Roberts, is the poorest play we have encountered in a year's reviewing. The best that one can say for it is that the author probably was sincere when he started out to write a verse tragedy dealing with the death of Edith Cavell. The result is undramatic, contains pages and pages of unpoetic verse, and deals unintelligently with its subject. The author is not even skillful as a poet, and he has no conception of dramatic values. Only racial prejudice could read a value into the book. (New York and Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press. $1.25.)

THE WITCHING HOUR, IN MIZZOURA, MRS. LEFFINGWELL'S BOOTS, and OLIVER GOLDSMITH, all by Augustus Thomas. It is worth while to have these plays if only as examples of American ingenuity in building dramatic vehicles according to the French "well-made" formula. For the student of dramatic construction it is doubly valuable to have them in this edition, for which the playwright has written a series of prefaces explaining how the pieces were manufactured for the market. Even the least conventional of the four, *The Witching Hour*, is an example of more or less mechanical manipulation of stock situations and timely ideas. Mr. Thomas' contribution to American drama is notable, not for spiritual insight or literary distinction, but for its fresh reportorial value and its skillful blending of the sure-fire elements of amusement. These plays are entertaining in the way that the *Saturday Evening Post* is entertaining: they are facilely and colloquially written, topical, and exciting. With the possible exception of *The Witching Hour*, they are intrinsically negligible and ephemeral; but as typical examples of the journalistic phase in the American theatre, they are well worth preserving. (New York: Samnel French. Each 50c.)

COMEDIES OF WORDS, by Arthur Schnitzler. One who believes that there is more or less value in marital regularity, necessarily places Schnitzler as a cynic moving in a false world. The five plays in this volume must serve to give a Puritanic nation that impression anew; for all deal with "affairs" in the making or in retrospect. But with allowance made for an obsession with sex-attraction, there remains the fact that Schnitzler is one of the most stimulating writers in the world. No other playwright is quite so keen a psychologist; no other dissects the soul quite so mercilessly; no other analyses actions and impulses with quite so nice a relish for every possibility of effect or feeling; no other so readily leads the reader to regard the elusive and subtle sensations and motives of life. And so, for those who have trained their appreciation to the intellectual rather than the emotional, these printed plays will come as a treat. None is likely to prove unusually effective on the stage; but all are worth producing occasionally in the little theatres. The translations are good, and there is an interesting speculative introduction. (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd. $1.50.)

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STATE OF MICHIGAN } ss.
COUNTY OF WAYNE }

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Sheldon Cheney, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor of the *Theatre Arts Magazine*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

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SHELDON CHENEY.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of March, 1917.

R. W. PULLEN. (My commission expires July, 1919.)

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